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The next issue will be printed, G-d willing,
for Parshas Noach.*

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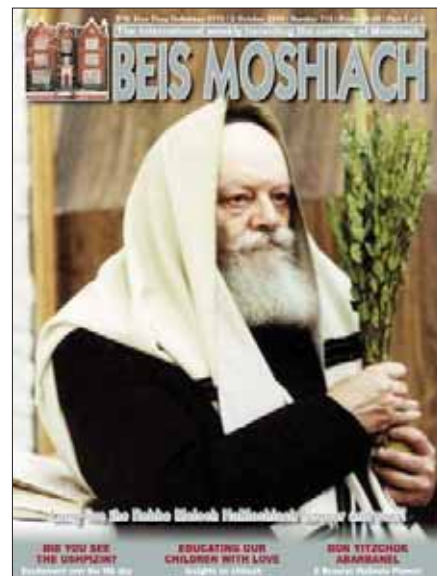
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A FOUNTAIN OF BLESSING

Sichos In English

A MESSAGE FOR THE HOLIDAY

The Rambam writes: [1] “Moshe ordained that on every festival, the Jews should read [a portion of the Torah which reflects] its content.”

He continues, listing all the passages read on the different festivals, and concludes [2] that on Simchas Torah, [3] we read Zos HaBracha. This implies that the reading of Zos HaBracha on Simchas Torah shares a connection to the content of the holiday itself; the rationale for reading it at that time is not merely that it is customary to conclude the yearly cycle of Torah readings on that festival.

ONE AND ONE

What is the inner content of Simchas Torah?

When contrasting the sacrificial offerings brought during the holiday of Sukkos to those brought on Simchas Torah, our Sages explain [4] that the seventy bulls offered on Sukkos refer to the seventy nations of the world.

The one bull offered on Simchas Torah refers to the Jewish people, the “one nation.”

Simchas Torah is a day when “Israel and the King are all alone.” [5] The essential bond

between G-d and the Jewish people surfaces and is expressed in joyous celebration.

This concept is reflected in the name of the Torah reading, V’Zos HaBracha, lit. “This is the blessing,” and its content, which focuses entirely on the blessings given the Jewish people, and the praise of their uniqueness.

WHY MOSHE BROKE THE TABLETS

In this context, however, a difficulty arises:

Rashi explains that the final phrase of the Torah, [6] l’inei kol Yisroel, “before the eyes of the entire Jewish people,” refers to the breaking of the tablets containing the Ten Commandments.

Our Sages attach great importance to conclusions, [7] explaining that they summarize the content of all the preceding concepts.

Why then does the conclusion of the entire Torah, and in particular, the conclusion of the reading V’Zos HaBracha, mention a subject which seemingly reflects the disgrace of the Jewish people - that the tablets containing the Ten Commandments were broken because of their sin of worshipping the Golden Calf?

This question leads to the

inference that this phrase alludes to the praise of the Jewish people, indeed to an aspect of praise with which it is appropriate to conclude the entire Torah.

To explain: When describing the reason for the breaking of the tablets, Rashi states: [8]

To express with an analogy:

“A king journeyed to a distant country, leaving his betrothed with maids. Because of the depravity of the maids, the reputation of the intended also became tarnished. The bridesman took the initiative and ripped up the wedding contract, saying: “If the king will order to kill her, I will protest, saying that she was not yet his wife.”

“The king is the Holy One, blessed be He; the maids, the mixed multitude [of converts who joined the Jews after the exodus]. The bridesman is Moshe, and the betrothed..., the Jewish people. Rashi’s intent is that Moshe broke the Tablets to protect the Jewish people from G-d’s wrath.” [9]

Here we see the unique importance of the Jewish people.

The Torah is G-d’s “delight, frolicking before Him at all times.” [10] And within the Torah, the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were engraved were “the work of G-d... and the writing, the writing of G-d,” [11] given to Moshe by G-d Himself. [12]

And yet when the future of the Jewish people was at stake, without hesitation, Moshe was willing to break the tablets to save the Jewish people. [13]

Why did Moshe take such a step? Because there is nothing, not even the Torah, which G-d cherishes more than a Jew.

WHO COMES FIRST?

Our Sages state [14] that there are two entities which predate the

The blessings Moshe gives the Jewish people stand in overt expression, bringing us a year of open and apparent good.

creation, the Torah and the Jewish people.

They continue: "I do not know which came first.... I say, however, the Jewish people came first." The intent is not preeminence in a chronological sense, but rather in importance.

The soul of every Jew is "an actual part of G-d from above." [15]

And therefore, the expression, [16] "My son, My firstborn, Israel," can be applied to every member of our people.

What then is the purpose of the Torah?

To reveal this essential quality; to make every member of our people conscious of it, and to provide a medium which will allow this dimension of our being to become manifest in our lives. It is this concept which the conclusion of the Torah underscores. [17]

OPEN AND APPARENT BLESSINGS

The name V'Zos HaBracha means "This is the blessing."

On the verse, [18] "This is my G-d, and I will glorify Him," Rashi comments that the word "this" implies a direct revelation, a manifestation of G-dliness so powerful that one can point with one's finger, and say: "This is it."

Similarly, the phrase "This is the blessing" implies that the blessings which Moshe gave - and gives - the Jewish people stand in overt expression, bringing us a

year of open and apparent good.

"The Jewish people, the Torah, and the Holy One, blessed be He, are one." [19]

Bringing out the inner spark of G-d which we possess through our Torah conduct will cause the Torah to serve as a medium of blessing, conveying G-d's bounty from the spiritual realms, and bringing it into actual expression in our material world.

Adapted from Likkutei Sichos, Vol. IX, p. 237ff; Parshas V'Zos HaBracha, 5748; Sichos Leil Shishi shel Chag HaSukkos, 5742

Notes:

1. Mishneh Torah, Hilchos T'filla 13:8ff, based on Megilla 31a.
2. Ibid.:13
3. In the Mishneh Torah, the Rambam does not, however, mention the name Simchas Torah, nor does he refer to the unique celebrations associated with that day.
4. Sukka 55b.
5. Zohar, Vol. I, p. 64a ff, 208b; III, p. 32a. See Seifer HaSichos 5751, Vol. I, p. 62, 65.
6. Deuteronomy 34:12.
7. See Brachos 12a. See also Brachos 31a which places an emphasis on concluding "with words of praise and comfort."
8. In his gloss to Exodus 34:1, based on Midrash Tanchuma, Ki Sisa 30; see also Shmos Rabba 43:1.
9. In another commentary (Exodus 32:19), Rashi states that the Moshe broke the tablets for the following reason: With regard to the Paschal sacrifice which is [only] one of the mitzvos, it is written (Exodus

12:43): "No alien may partake of it" [this is interpreted as excluding also any Jew whose conduct is alien to G-d's will]. If so, since the Jews are now apostates, can I give them the entire Torah?

This passage indicates that the tablets were destroyed as an act of respect to the Torah, that it should not be given to people who had committed so severe a sin. The two concepts are complementary. For there are two dimensions to Moshe's conduct: an act of deference to the Torah, and a more encompassing reason (for it is possible to understand why, out of deference to the Torah, Moshe did not give the tablets to the Jews, but not why he destroyed them), his love for the Jewish people and desire to protect them.

10. Proverbs 7:30.

11. Exodus 32:16.

12. See the gloss of Rashi, Deuteronomy, loc. cit., to the phrase li'chol ha'yad ha'chazaka.

13. Moreover, it was not the entire Jewish people who sinned, only a small portion of them. Nevertheless, even to save these base people, Moshe was willing to destroy the tablets given to him by G-d.

14. Tanna D'Bei Eliyahu Rabba, ch. 14. See also B'Reishis Rabba 1:4.

15. Tanya, ch. 2.

16. Exodus 4:22.

17. A connection to this concept can also be drawn to the name of the holiday, Simchas Torah, which literally means "the happiness of the Torah." Chassidic thought (maamer L'havin Inyan Simchas Torah, 5679) explains that because the Jewish people are above the Torah, they are able to bring joy to the Torah, as it were.

18. Exodus 15:2.

19. Zohar, Vol. III, p. 73a.

MOSHIACH ON CAMPUS IN RISHON L'TZIYON

By Nosson Avrohom

When Dotan Korati called out to Hashem for the first time, he was 22 years old. Today he is a Chabad Chassid and shliach to the largest private college in Israel, attended by 10,000 students.



Colleges have begun springing up all over Israel to complement the many old-time universities. In colleges and universities all over the world there are campus shluchim who reach out to the students at this vulnerable stage in life when their worldview is solidifying. In Israel, it was only a matter of time before shluchim would begin working with college students. Indeed, in recent years, some special, dynamic shluchim have taken on this challenging shlichus.

“Working with young people demands total devotion,” says R’

Dotan Korati, shliach to the college for business administration in Rishon L’Tziyon. He works under the auspices of the Chabad house of Ne’ot Ashlim in Rishon, which is run by the shliach, R’ Ariel Goren.

Along with an array of shiurim, t’fillos, and programs throughout the year, the shluchim also provide a listening ear. I went along with R’ Korati to see what he does at the largest private college in Israel at which about 10,000 students study business administration, law, accounting, computer science, interior decorating, communications

and theater.

R’ Dotan’s shlichus is noteworthy for its “Jewish pride” and a candid presentation of the Rebbe’s teachings. You can’t help but be impressed when you see how many people daven at the Chabad house, which is already too small (the college administration realized this themselves, and designated a more spacious area for them), as well as how many people attend the shiurim, or the number of bachurim who decided to move on to learning in yeshivos.

R’ Korati has charisma. He



speaks directly, greets everyone, and is both serious and friendly. Within just three years he has managed to make Chabad's work an integral part of the college scene.

FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH JUDAISM – AT AGE 21

Before delving into his work at the college, I asked R' Korati to tell me something about his life before he became a Chassid and later, a shliach.

"I was born and raised in kibbutz Kfar Rupin, in the north. I was raised in total ignorance of anything

When I found out that they were kashering the kibbutz dining room so religious people who came from nearby Beit Shaan could eat there, too, I was adamantly opposed. I took the liberty of removing the certificate of kashrus so that the kitchen couldn't operate.

Jewish. There are kibbutzim where you feel a hatred for Judaism; at our kibbutz, for the most part, Judaism

was so out there that they didn't discuss or even mention it. Aside from knowing that I was Jewish, I

‘G-d, You and I both know that throughout my life I have done nothing the way You want; on the contrary, I have only done things to anger You. But this time I am pleading that You save me.’

knew nothing at all.”

Dotan says the first time he encountered anything Jewish was at the age of 21, when he toured India. He visited the Chabad house in Pushkar and saw t’fillin and Kiddush on Shabbos.

“At the kibbutz they celebrate Pesach, but the seider is like any other kibbutz party that the members take part in, with group singing accompanied by an organist. There was no explanation about how this night is actually different than other nights or why this holiday is celebrated altogether. I felt no personal or spiritual connection to Pesach - or to any other holiday, for that matter. It was just another social evening, lacking any Jewish content.”

Although in his home he wasn’t raised with hatred for Judaism or religious people, his general spiritual desolation made him feel disgusted by Jewish things.

“When I was a boy, I was known in the kibbutz as anti-religious. When I found out that they were kashering the kibbutz dining room so religious people who came from nearby Beit Shaan could eat there, too, I was adamantly opposed. I took the liberty of removing the certificate of kashrus so that the kitchen couldn’t operate. The kibbutz was in an uproar over this mysterious theft.”

His parents eventually found out that their son had taken the kashrus certificate. They called him in for a talk and laid out for him their moral approach: although religious people

and religion are lies, what he did still wasn’t proper.

“From the time my thinking matured, I sought after true meaning in life. At the age of 16 I read books about various religions, philosophy of life, and even a lot about Christianity. At the end of twelfth grade, I went to Greece with my class on a graduation trip which was devoted completely to an interest in idols.”

He never dreamed that what he sought could be found in Judaism.

“I thought Judaism was lacking depth. I saw it as a materialistic religion and full of rebuke and scare tactics. I remember an anecdote from eleventh grade when I went to an art school in Givat Chaviva to study sculpture. That year I took a great interest in Christian works on iconography, as well as other foreign philosophies that embraced idols. My final project was a tall, impressive idol. When they asked me what it represented I said that since I had nothing to believe in, I had constructed an idol which I would believe in and worship!”

TRY PRAYING!

Dotan’s first glimpse of Judaism took place after his army service, when he moved to Tel Aviv with a good friend, Tomer Ayal, who was also a kibbutznik, from kibbutz Neve Ohr.

“He began taking an interest in Judaism and he included me in more and more interesting aspects of it that he discovered during his research of his tradition. At first I

wasn’t that interested in what he had to say and it went in one ear and out the other, but after a while I began to realize that there was something big here that I had never been taught or exposed to. I began to listen.”

That year was the first year that Dotan acceded to his friend’s wishes and agreed to fast on Yom Kippur.

“I saw that there is something deep in Judaism, contrary to what I had previously thought, especially considering the fact that my friend, whom I considered a thinking person, was taking an interest in it. We went to India together at that point. He led the way in this interest in Judaism while I followed behind, constantly checking things out. The first Chabad house we visited was in Dramsala, which is run by R’ Dror Shaul. It was the place where I put on t’fillin for the first time in my life.”

Step by step, along with his good friend, Dotan began to acknowledge that Judaism is not the primitive and antiquated religion he had previously thought it to be.

“I began to feel good about it. It lit up my neshama and I felt that there were good answers to the questions I was asking. It didn’t take long for me to shake off all my anti-religious sentiments and discover a magical world that filled me with light and satisfaction. I began to take on more mitzvos and I saw that this demon wasn’t so terrible and frightening. I kept my first Shabbos in Dramsala.”

Dotan points out that his journey towards Judaism did not entail any crisis. He had whatever a person could want out of the material world and all he lacked was inner meaning, which he was beginning to find.

“During the entire process I felt that I was being led, that someone was taking me by my two hands and leading me. There were times I tried to stop, but I felt that this force was stronger than me. The final blow that led me to acknowledge that

there is a Creator was when my friend and I trekked to a charming village called Chahal, which is situated in a pastoral valley in northern India.

"I discovered an abscess on my leg. This was very dangerous because if it spread, they would have to amputate. My leg got worse until I couldn't get out of bed and I just lay there in great pain. My friend came into the room one day and said, 'You tried everything but prayer. What can it hurt to pray? It's the only thing that will save you. Don't be stubborn!'

"He spoke tough and added, 'if you refuse to pray, then manage on your own.' That was the first time that I called out to Hashem sincerely and from the depths of my heart. I felt that I had no other option. I prayed by myself, saying, 'G-d, You and I both know that throughout my life I have done nothing the way You want; on the contrary, I have only done things to anger You. But this time I am pleading that You save me.'

"Just one day after that prayer, a Swiss tourist came to the village. She told us that she had made it her life's mission to travel the world, to meet Jews, and help them.

"She said that for a long time she had taken care of an elderly Jew in Yerushalayim, on a voluntary basis. When I realized that she had medical credentials, I told her about my problem and she said that she knew the virus well and even had the proper medicine to eliminate it. She began to treat me and within a few days, it was gone. 'Look at what happened here,' I marveled to



Rabbi Dotan Korati near the menorah at the college

myself. 'In the past, I always railed against G-d, and just a day after that prayer, He sent me a tourist who saved my life.'

"That was a major turning point for me, since this shattered the ideology that I had been raised with on the kibbutz."

THE DEAN OF THE COLLEGE SPOKE ABOUT "THE JEWISH ESSENCE"

When Dotan returned to Eretz Yisroel he began working on the kibbutz in agricultural jobs while simultaneously looking for the

Chabad center closest to him. He connected with the shliach in the neighboring city of Beit Shaan, Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelevitz, and the shliach to the kibbutzim of the valley, Rabbi Roi Tor. They taught him a lot, farbrenged with him, guided him, and built up his Chassidic-spiritual world. Not long afterwards, he decided to attend the Chabad yeshiva in Ramat Aviv.

After he married, Dotan went back to the kibbutz and from there moved to Rechovot, where he attended yeshivas Daat. Once he entered the world of Chassidus and the amazing derech of the Rebbe, he realized that what would give the Rebbe much nachas would be if he went on shlichus. He looked around for a place where he could maximize his talents and channel them for shlichus.

"When we were in India, we went to Pushkar and helped the shliach, R' Shimi Goldstein. Since then, our families have been close and three years ago we spent Pesach in

Nachalat Har Chabad with his in-laws. While we were there we met another son-in-law, R' Ariel Goren, shliach in western Rishon L'Tzayon. When he heard that I was looking for a shlichus, he said that for a long time he had been looking for a shliach who would work at the big college in his area. I saw this as tremendous hashgacha pratis.

"I didn't ask many questions. I went to the college right after Pesach. There was a small shul there and that's where I began working. I arranged s'farim and started shiurim. Nobody asked me what I

There was a small shul there and that's where I began working. I arranged s'farim and started shiurim. Nobody asked me what I was doing there or who appointed me.

was doing there or who appointed me. I went l'chat'chilla aribber. As time went on, the staff and students got to know me and my work."

When Dotan looks back at the early days of his shlichus, he can't help but be excited. Today he is recognized everywhere and his work has become official, but at the beginning he went with nothing more than his tremendous faith in the Rebbe's ko'ach.

"We are inclined to think that we operate under own strength but I saw, time after time, how Hashem was guiding everything. In a meeting with the dean of campus, I discovered that he was a friend of Chabad in Ramat Aviv and he admired the Chabad movement and its work. Another dean visited and said that he had been impressed by Chabad in Thailand. It turned out that all of them were connected to Chabad in some way or another."

When he first started working on campus, R' Korati was surprised to see that in most of the offices of the senior staff there were pictures of the Rebbe.

"Even those who didn't have pictures of the Rebbe hanging remembered that at home they had some, and they brought them to hang in their offices. So by my next visit, without my suggesting it, I saw a picture of the Rebbe on the wall of the office. In a television segment about the college, they interviewed the dean. On the wall of his office there is a large picture of the Rebbe next to the Israeli Declaration of Independence. When the young reporter pointed this dichotomy out,

he responded, 'We have the Medina and then there is the Jewish Essence.'

"It's exciting because many people feel that antagonism towards Judaism comes from academia. Apparently, the Rebbe's spiritual revolution has been successful in this last bastion of opposition. I have observed real emuna on the part of professors and members of academia who seem estranged.

"I will tell you something else. On the front of the shul there is a big sign which says, 'Yehudi, come put on t'fillin,' and underneath that it says Yechi. One of the students who got involved through us asked to hang it up and to tell you the truth, I was a little apprehensive about how the administration would react. Nevertheless, I gave him permission to hang the sign and expected a dressing down because of it.

"One week went by and then another, and nothing happened. After a while I was called to the dean's room and I figured this was it. The conversation turned out very differently than I thought it would. He apologized for first becoming available to meet with me at that time even though I had been working there at the college for so long, and then he enthusiastically began telling me of his encounter with the Rebbe 25 years ago.

"He said that at that time he worked for Carmel vineyards and when a colleague urged him to join him on a trip to the Rebbe, he agreed. As he stood on line for dollars, there was a woman behind

him who had come to ask for a bracha for a child. The Rebbe skipped over him and gave the woman a dollar, and another dollar for the child she would have. In shock over the Rebbe's ruach ha'kodesh, she fainted."

When R' Korati thinks back, even an optimistic person such as himself is astounded by the tremendous upheaval Chabad has brought about on campus.

"At the student union there is a department called 'Beit Knesset,' and I am in charge of that. This is the only college in Israel that has a department like this. I remember something interesting from the early days, when I set up a t'fillin stand on a special day when most of the students assembled.

"The dean of operations came over to me and shouted, 'What are you doing here?' I thought I was being thrown out until he continued, 'Why are you on the side? Set up your stand in the center, where the other stands are!'"

"One day, when we advertised on the internal campus Internet site about a lecture of ours, one of the instructors angrily said that Chabad was taking over the college. I was nervous about the uproar that he made. Some members of the administration were also nervous about the school's reputation but in the end I saw that only good came out of it. Until then, the top echelons had refused to meet with me in order to approve our work, but now they were forced to meet with me and as a result, our work was officially approved."

K'HILLA OF MEKURAVIM

It's amazing to see how popular R' Korati is as he walks through the hallways of the college. Within a short time he has managed to form a k'hilla of mekuravim. Some of them have become full-fledged Chassidim and continued their studies at the

yeshiva in Ramat Aviv or in Rishon L'Tziyon. R' Korati doesn't like to be asked, "What is the secret to your success?" In his opinion, it's all about carrying out the shlichus in the best possible way.

"There is a Rebbe, a leader. I try to write to the Rebbe at least once a day with at least one student and all of them see amazing answers.

"One of the big problems that religious students here have is that tests are always on Sunday and they can't prepare the day before, on Shabbos. Failing a test can cost a lot of money because they have to take the course over again. It takes quite a commitment to keep Shabbos.

"Lior is one of my closest people. Learning about the Rebbe and Chassidus thrilled him. Over time he learned and became more involved and today he is one of the active members of the Chabad house at the college and he proudly spreads the Besuras Ha'Geula. Lior zealously observed Shabbos and didn't touch his books before a big test. But on Motzaei Shabbos he had managed to study only thirty pages out of three hundred. He was very worried but I'll never forget what he said when he came Sunday morning: 'What shall I do when my soul craves Torah?'

"I suggested that he write to the Rebbe. This gave him tremendous hope. What happened is just amazing. The questions on the test were only on the thirty pages that he had studied and he finished the test among the first. He recently received a special scholarship because of his excellent marks."

A similar story happened to Shai, a student who is currently in the Chabad yeshiva in Rishon L'Tziyon.

"He had a final coming up and he knew that if he failed it, he would have to make up for it in the next semester, when he was hoping to attend the Chabad yeshiva. He came to me and promised that if he passed the test he would go to yeshiva



Students davening at the college shul

On more than a few occasions I have heard someone say, 'What luck that you're here. We thought our connection with Chabad was over.'

during summer vacation. He wrote to the Rebbe but ended up failing. At first he was tremendously upset but then he found a mistake in the mark. He complained about it and the mark was adjusted. He spent the summer at yeshiva and is still there."

R' Korati says that he often finds himself dealing with bizarre situations in his work with young people who are looking for meaning in life.

"A student came over to me and said that she loved G-d and therefore, wanted a tattoo that said, 'Shivisi Hashem l'negdi tamid.' She said that she heard this was forbidden and asked me to permit it. I explained to her why the Torah forbids it but she persisted; she wanted everyone to know that she was Jewish and was proud of it.

"She told me she had already gone to a tattoo shop but at the last minute she had decided to leave. She asked me whether I could explain this and I patiently told her

about the neshama that is a portion of G-d Above and how even if she loved G-d, there were other ways to express this. I invited her to attend our shiur and since then she participates in our programs. I happened to meet her one day and she said, 'I decided not to get any more tattoos, not about G-d and not about anything else.'"

BESURAS HA'GEULA AND MIRACLES

At the Chabad house of the college in Rishon L'Tziyon they spread the Besuras Ha'Geula the way the Rebbe wants. On the poster at the entrance to the shul it says Yechi, at every shiur they proclaim Yechi, and they learn and discuss Geula nonstop.

"The dean of publications of the college came over to me a few months ago, as I was about to daven Shmoneh Esrei, and said, 'I know that the Rebbe is Moshiach.' When I

“A student came over to me and said that she loved G-d and therefore, wanted a tattoo that said, ‘Shivisi Hashem l’negdi tamid.’ She said that she heard this was forbidden and asked me to permit it.”

finished davening I asked him how he knew this. He said that he had decided to research the subject of Moshiach and he found an article that explains how the Rebbe is Moshiach according to the Rambam.

“That irreligious high ranking staff member flooded the hallways of the college with copies of that article, at his own initiative.

“Speaking about Moshiach, it’s amazing how people want to connect and write to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh, and many of them see miracles and unbelievable answers. There is a story that happened a few months ago with another member of the administrative staff, in the computer department. He’s a Russian Jew; the kind of person that we tend to think is completely estranged from Judaism.

“One day, I heard someone call my name. I saw it was this man and when I asked him how I could help him, he told me that half a year ago, I had asked him to put on t’fillin and he had not reacted nicely. This had bothered him ever since and he decided to apologize and to put on t’fillin.

“Of course I was happy about his change of mind. This was the first time he was putting on t’fillin in his life! After that, for two weeks, he would come every morning to put on t’fillin. After two weeks he said he wanted to consult with me about a serious problem he had been suffering from for years. He had

recurring fears that made his life intolerable and he asked me what I advised him to do. He said that his friends told him to consult with kabbalists in the south of the country and he asked me for my opinion.

“I suggested that he write to the Rebbe. This seemed crazy to him but he finally agreed. The answer was in volume 23 and it was about prostate surgery. At first I didn’t understand the answer and what it had to do with him, but then I had a brainstorm. I asked him whether he had been circumcised according to halacha. When he said he hadn’t, we went to the mohel and shliach, Rabbi Chanan Kochanovsky. Since then he hasn’t stopped praising me because his fears completely disappeared.”

Miracle stories involving the Igros Kodesh are daily fare at the college and R’ Korati related another fascinating story:

“Whenever someone challenges the idea of writing to the Rebbe and its efficacy, I tell them the same story with the names of the people it happened to, after which they have nothing to say, even the most intellectual among them.

“The story is that one day a young student, a mekurav to our programs, came into the shul with a tear-stained face. When I asked him what was wrong, he said that his cousin, a single mother to a month old baby, had cancer and the doctors didn’t give much hope to her

recovery. They asked the family to say goodbye to her.

“I suggested, of course, that he write to the Rebbe and ask for a bracha. He was happy to do so and the answer was clear, ‘blessing for a complete and speedy recovery.’ Although the answer was clear I didn’t have the courage to assure him that he could stop worrying, but it seems he had more faith than I did. On the spot, he called the family and told them there was nothing to worry about.

“The fellow disappeared and I thought the worst had happened. He was someone who showed up every day so his protracted disappearance led me to believe that he was very upset. A month later I met him and he glowed with happiness. He apologized for not showing up, saying he had been busy and hadn’t had opportunity to tell me that what the doctors had thought was a malignant brain tumor was nothing but a nerve that looked like a growth. This story sent chills down my spine and it became the talk of the day among the students.”

How is working with students different than working with other types of people?

“Students are young people who haven’t constructed their lives yet and to a certain extent are still unformed. In every shiur and program I notice that they are searching for answers to important questions in their lives. Each of them is looking for meaning. If we can be with them at the critical stage when they are solidifying their outlooks and emuna, and expose them to Chassidus and the Rebbe, their lives will be different.

“There are many students who come back from touring in the Far East or the US where they encountered Chabad, and when they come to Israel they look for the same warm atmosphere, deep shiurim, and the truth of Chabad. On more than a few occasions I

have heard someone say, ‘What luck that you’re here. We thought our connection with Chabad was over.’ A few months ago, a guy who had been traveling in South America came to this college, where he met us and began learning sichos and maamarim of the Rebbe with me.

“Each time we finished learning something from the Rebbe, he would exclaim enthusiastically, ‘They lied to us! Why don’t you run in the streets and show this to everyone?’ There’s a student who became interested in the Rebbe in the US and even visited 770. When she returned to Israel she dropped it all again. Then she came to college and met us and she was re-inspired. Today she organizes all the women’s activities at the Chabad house. Her devotion to the Rebbe is so great that it’s amazing. I have endless stories like this. We simply must be in the right place at the right time.”

Those in academia are usually more intellectual. How do you find working with them?

“Some like to philosophize, especially when we don’t hide our belief that the Rebbe will be coming momentarily to redeem us and take us out of galus. To these people I always say that the Rebbe is a big expert in science and I give them examples and refer them to the books so they can see this for themselves.

At the same time, I explain, with all his scientific knowledge, when it comes to emuna, the Rebbe is a bigger believer than the typical Moroccan grandmother. With these academics I speak directly to the neshama, refusing to enter into philosophical debates.

“The neshama doesn’t need proofs. The stage of proofs comes later. In Tanya and Chassidus, it doesn’t talk about whether there is a Torah but what the Torah teaches us, because even a Jew who appears to be distant and even antagonistic cannot and does not want to be



Students listening to a lecture on Chassidus

estranged from Elokus. The same approach holds true with the topic of Moshiach. Every so often there are religious students who raise questions. I show them who signed the p’sak din about the Rebbe and Moshiach. Those rabbanim surely know halacha no less than they do. Those who want to explore it further have to be willing to devote time to it and then I am happy to sit with them and study the subject together.”

FROM CONTRACTION TO EXPANSION

The shul at the college had a Hachnasas Seifer Torah earlier this year. A religious Jew who heard about this was touched and made a donation.

“Soon,” said R’ Korati in great excitement, “we are going to move to a larger and newer place in a new building that the college built and designated for classrooms. The administration saw that there is a demand for what we do and that the present location is too small for the number of people who daven here and attend shiurim, so they decided to give us a bigger place.”

There is an interesting story behind the administration’s decision,

as R’ Korati relates:

“On Yud-Beis Tammuz, 2008, one of the maintenance men came to the shul and said he was told to knock down one of the walls of the shul in order to enlarge the college’s telemarketing room next door, since the operators were crowded in there. I told him, ‘no way,’ he could not destroy a shul. He was a believing Jew but he didn’t have a choice. He called his boss and said that I refused to let him do the job. After some discussion, the boss showed up and decided the wall had to be broken. The shul was significantly reduced in size.

“In the course of my discussion with him, he suddenly stopped and said angrily, ‘What is your job here anyway?’ I told him that I am the shliach of the Lubavitcher Rebbe at the college and at that, he kept quiet. Since then we have become good friends.

“I wondered how it was possible that this could happen to the shul on Yud-beis Tammuz. I got the answer this year, when the administration of the college decided to give us a new place. Amazingly, we got it on Yud-beis Tammuz. The crowding that resulted from the destruction is what led to our expansion.”

DID YOU SEE THE USHPIZIN?

By A. Avrohom

For eight days straight, the Rebbe spoke about the Chabad Rebbes as the “Chassidishe Ushpizin,” and all was calm. So why all the excitement over the ninth day? What was so controversial about this guest?

In Shnas Hakhel 5741/1980, the Rebbe said a sicha each night of Sukkos in which he explained the significance of the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva of that day. A major part of the sicha was devoted to an explanation of the Ushpizin, the ones mentioned in the Zohar: Avrohom, Yitzchok, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef and Dovid, and on Shmini Atzeres, Shlomo. He also spoke about the Chassidishe Ushpizin: the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid, the Alter Rebbe, the Mittler Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek, the Rebbe Maharash, the Rebbe Rashab, and on Shmini Atzeres, the Rebbe Rayatz. Each night, the Rebbe explained the connection and/or the differences between them. Every year he revealed new ideas and we danced all night with those sichos.

(As for the Ushpizin on Shmini Atzeres, Shlomo HaMelech and the Rebbe Rayatz, the Rebbe said that they are not Ushpizin - guests - but

“balabatim,” for the idea of Shmini Atzeres is that we leave the temporary sukkos and go back to permanent housing.)

For years the Chassidim looked forward expectantly to hear the continuation, i.e. according to the pattern, the “Ushpiza” or the “balabus” associated with Simchas Torah is the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach! (That being a chiddush unto itself, since on all the other days there are two Ushpizin but on Simchas Torah there is only one, the Rebbe who is Moshiach).

In the following Hakhel year, 5748/1987, at the farbrengen on the night of Simchas Torah, the Chassidim finally got to hear the long-awaited words at the beginning of one of the sichos: **“Based on what was said, that Simchas Torah is the ninth day, continuing from the seven days of Sukkos and Shmini Atzeres and in a loftier manner, this ought to be expressed in the Ushpizin too ...”**

All ears perked up; shhhhhh, there is going to be a gilui now that you don’t want to miss!

But the Chassidim didn’t hear anything, seemingly, about the “ninth nasi.” What they *did* hear, which you can see in a reshima of that sicha, was that the special quality of Simchas Torah, the ninth day, is emphasized in the Torah reading of that day, “before the eyes of all Israel.”

Then there was a long explanation starting with a question. How can we say that the Ushpizin are **specifically the leaders of Chassidus klalis (the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid) and the leaders of Chabad in particular**, when there are many tzaddikim in the world? The Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid themselves had dozens of talmidim who were tzaddikim!

The Rebbe explains that this is like the transmission of the Torah from generation to generation (which is enumerated at the beginning of Pirkei Avos and in more detail in the introduction to Mishneh Torah of the Rambam). In every generation there were scores of Torah scholars who received the traditions of the Torah, however, “there is one who is the main mekabel-recipient.”

The Rebbe emphasized that this does not take away from the honor of the other tzaddikim, “but regarding **halacha** an order of hishtalshlus was established in Toras HaChassidus which includes the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid, the Alter Rebbe and the Chabad n’siim who succeeded him, and they are the seven Chassidishe Ushpizin for all Israel.”

The Rebbe concludes the topic, “And this is conveyed along the lines of what was mentioned earlier in the Torah reading for Simchas Torah, **“before the eyes of all Israel,”** which is the chiddush added to Simchas Torah ... that we openly see the connection of these

[Chassidishe] Ushpizin to all Israel.”

What is the connection between all this and Simchas Torah and the ninth of the Ushpizin?

Does this question come up only with Simchas Torah? Back on the third day of Sukkos, when we announced that the Chassidic guest, the one who follows the Maggid, is the youngest of his talmidim, the Alter Rebbe, that is when there should have been an uproar and people should have asked: Why not another tzaddik?

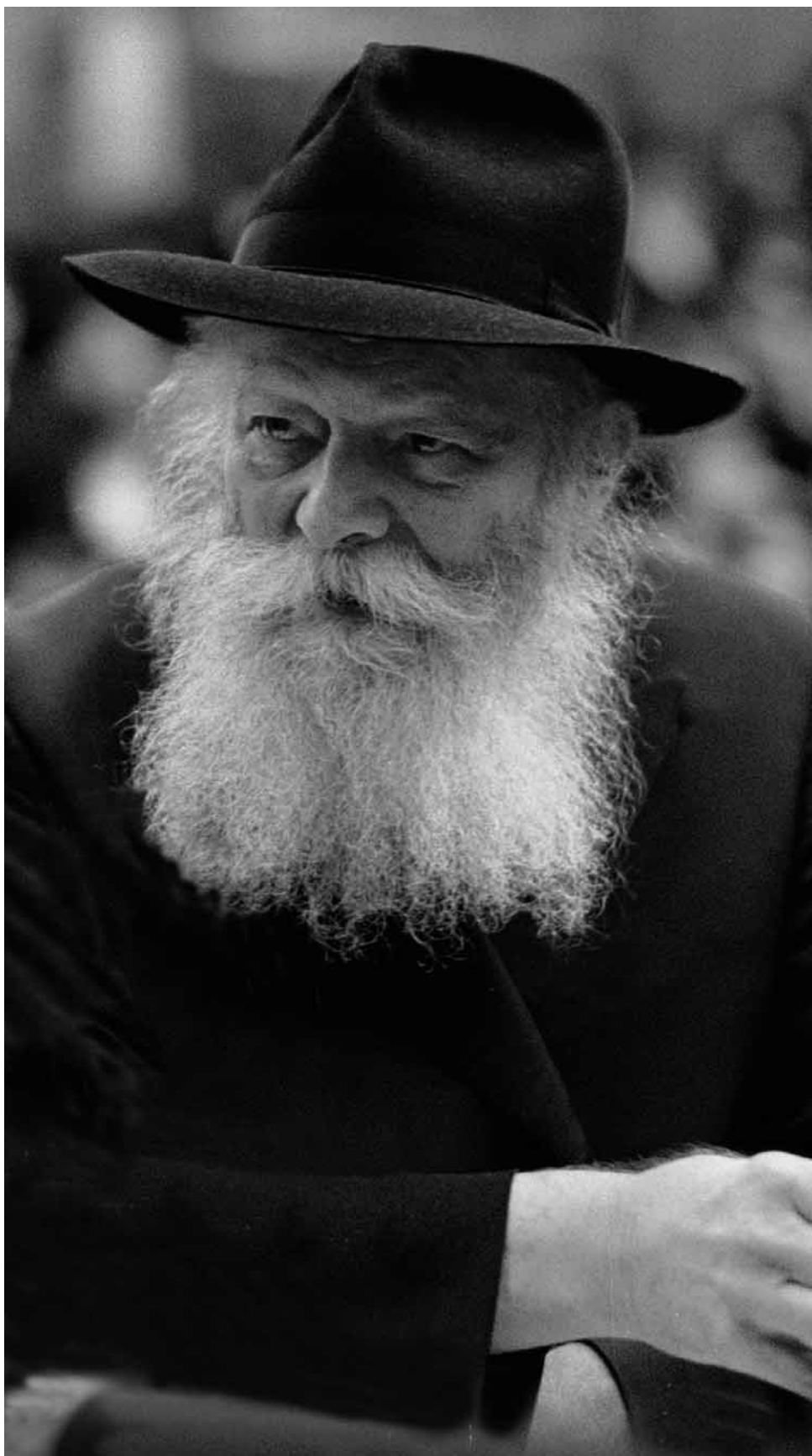
Even within Chabad, there were those who, in the fourth generation, found someone else to hear Chassidus from, and so why aren't they complaining about the choice of the Rebbe Maharash, the youngest of the sons? What about Kopust and Liadi? Their followers were chevra who in their day knew how to make a commotion ...

And if the question is on the general idea of Ushpizin being the leaders of Toras HaChassidus, then there should have been a hue and cry on the very first day!

Why is it that each day of Sukkos passed peacefully and suddenly, on Simchas Torah, we have a question, “how can we publicize to the world” that the seven Ushpizin are the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid and the Chabad n'siim? Why now? Where was everybody when for eight days the Rebbe spoke about **eight tzaddikim** in addition to the ones enumerated in the Zohar?

True, the explanation in Torah “before the eyes of all Israel” appears in the reading for Simchas Torah, but that itself is odd. Why do we wait with the explanation when the question seems to present itself the week before?

As Chassidim, we also need to understand – why, for heaven's sake, is not a word said about the Ushpiza of the ninth day, who is the balabus and our Rebbe? Why is it specifically on this day that we suddenly start



CHAPTER ELEVEN

One year later, even as there are signs of improvement, people are still reeling from the financial collapses and bankruptcies of big banks and investment firms.

Someone pointed out to me that in the United States, bankruptcy is referred to as “Chapter Eleven,” since in American law the eleventh chapter deals with bankruptcy and protection from creditors.

What does it say in the first “chapter eleven” in Torah? Look it up in Chapter 11 of B'Reishis, where it says, “Let us build a city and a tower and its top in the heavens and we will make a name for ourselves ... and Hashem dispersed them from there over the entire earth ...”

The first Chapter 11 is about the building of the Tower of Babel and the punishment of the Generation of Dispersal. We have seen in our days the collapse of the modern Tower of Babel which is symbolized by American skyscrapers!

But do not despair. In order to see how things will turn out, let us look at Chapter 11 in the last book of the Written Torah, Divrei HaYamim. There it says, “And all of Israel gathered to Dovid in Chevron, saying ... and Hashem your G-d said to you, you will shepherd My nation, Yisroel, and you will be a prince over My nation Israel. And all the elders of Israel came to the king in Chevron and Dovid made a covenant with them in Chevron before Hashem, **and they anointed Dovid as king over Israel** as the word of Hashem through Shmuel.”

Amen, kein yehi ratzon!

Everybody is willing and happy to welcome neshamos of tzaddikim from the World of Truth, even if they were born in Poland and Russia and not in Hungary or Tunisia. That's all right; on Shavuot, I go to visit my Admur, and on Sukkos, other Admurim come to visit me.

talking about “before the eyes of all Israel?” We finally get to the “point” but it is still not mentioned explicitly!

Nobody can pride themselves on understanding Daas Elyon, but from the perspective of Daas Tachton, why the question arises on the ninth day and why it is associated with Simchas Torah and its Ushpiza seems quite simple:

When you go over to a Jew and

say: Listen, along with Avrohom Avinu, if you don't mind, please make room for another guest – the tzaddik, the Baal Shem Tov. Who wouldn't jump at the opportunity? Who would begin to count seats in the sukka when in the doorway stands someone who, together with the Ohr HaChayim HaKadosh, could have brought Moshiach? By all means! Let him come in! We

prepared plenty. May he bless us and our children, amen!

Just as in gashmius there is “buy one, get one free,” so too in ruchnius. Along with Yitzchok Avinu who was bound on the altar, you get the Maggid of Mezritch. Say what you want, but if Yitzchok Avinu is going with him, then I'm interested, even if my great-grandfather learned in Volozhin.

So too, when you tell someone that along with Yaakov Avinu, the Baal HaTanya and the Shulchan Aruch HaRav also wants to visit his sukka, there is no one who would not rejoice over the good news.

And so goes it, day by day. You tell a Yid:

-R Yid, the Baal Shem Tov is here!

-Moiradik!

-Tzadik'l, the Mezritcher Maggid is coming in

-Pilei pla'im! (Amazing)

-The Baal HaTanya is coming

-Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu!

-The Mitteler Rebbe is on the

way

-Burich haba b'sheim Hashem

-and the Tzemach Tzedek

-a groise zechiya!

... And when you tell him on Shmini Atzeres: Along with Shlomo HaMelech you will also get the Rebbe Rayatz of Chabad, and not stam, but as **balabatim**, the person will kiss your hands and thank you from the depths of his heart, and say what an honor it is and what a pity that Zaidy Shimon a”h is no longer here, and they should come on Chanuka and Pesach too, and next time we will bring all the grandchildren and the second cousins so that they too can receive his bracha, and so on and so forth.

Everybody is willing and happy to welcome **neshamos of tzaddikim from the World of Truth**, even if they were born in Poland and Russia and not in Hungary or Tunisia. That's all right; on Shavuot, I go to visit my Admur, and on Sukkos,

other Admurim come to visit me.

But when you tell Yidden that the Lubavitcher Rebbe entered their home, i.e. the **present Rebbe**, it's: 'Just one minute! Excuse me! Do you mean to tell me that my rabbanim are not chashuv enough? Why do we always have to hear about your mitzvaim? Where is it written and who said and why davka him?'

All those opposed, no matter their background or place of origin, Chassidim or Misnagdim, suddenly rear their heads. When the Lubavitcher Rebbe comes in like a "balabus," as a Rebbe, then they truly feel that this is not some kind of virtual person but someone who is actually trying to take over the place.

People are receptive to tzaddikim of previous generations but when you tell them that from a "halachic standpoint," the one tzaddik who is connected to Klal Yisroel on this day is coming in and he is the Rebbe, Nasi HaDor, Navi HaDor, and the Moshiach of the Dor, then they scream: 'H-E-L-P! The Lubavitchers want to take over! They are serious! They really think that there is going to be one king of Israel!'

And this is why we have to emphasize the words "before the eyes of all Israel." The Jewish people are fine up until the sixth generation. Jews are open and willing to welcome tzaddikim from all groups and even expose their children to the vast library of Jewish teachings from a variety of sources. As people like to say, "We take the best that each has to offer."

But on Simchas Torah you have to say the truth and the whole truth: When it comes to Klal Yisroel and the totality of Torah, there is no Moetzes G'dolei Yisroel or Vaad Rabbanim L'Inyanei ... There is **one** Nasi and **one** Rebbe and **one** king and **one** leader. And he comes to **everyone's** house, whether he likes it or not.

The truth is that sometimes it's

Just as in gashmius there is "take one, get one free," so too in ruchnius. Along with Yitzchok Avinu you get the Maggid of Mezritch. Say what you want, but if Yitzchok Avinu is going with him, then I'm interested, even if my great-grandfather learned in Volozhin.

not as hard for the hosts as for those who have to make the hospitality arrangements – the Chabad Chassidim who need to inform the public to prepare for his arrival.

-And who is the Ushpiza for the ninth day?

-Listen, let us say l'chaim, today is Simchas Torah, today all of us ...

Blah blah blah. Come on! Say the truth! Don't be embarrassed to say "before the eyes of all Israel" – there is a Rebbe in Israel!

This is the gilui which the Rebbe gave in his kindness during Hakhel 5748.

Nobody needed to be informed that after the Rebbe Rayatz comes the Rebbe. We all know how to count until nine. The point that was new, that needed to be explained and planted in our minds and hearts, was that this needs to be **before the eyes of all Israel**. And it was just those things that were hard to do in front of all Israel that we began to hear about in detail starting in 5748.

If we make the Rebbe into another Baal Shem Tov then we manage to avoid any unpleasantness. But if the Rebbe is the **Rebbe**, a Rebbe that even a Maggid Shiur in Ponovezh gets chayus from, and even those who attend a tish in Yerushalayim belong to, and even someone born in Casablanca needs to obey, and he is the one who will redeem all groups, all segments of our Jewish society, from the street kids to the budding scholars – we

need to put in hard work so that he is indeed "before the eyes of all Israel."

There are some who think that it's enough to spread the Rebbe's teachings and it's better not to get into awkward situations. The response to them is that just like the commentary of Rashi on "before the eyes of all Israel" – if the Jewish people are on one side and the Torah is on the other side, Moshe is ready to break the Luchos in order to protect Israel.

When there is something that affects the Geula of the Jewish people, "do all that you can." We have an obligation to "publicize to all people of the generation," that there is a prophet, the Moshiach of the generation. For those who think (mistakenly!) that this entails forgoing spreading the teachings of the Rebbe, then the Torah tells us clearly: **yashar kochacha she'shibarta!** Thank you for breaking the Luchos!

In our case it refers to breaking your own self, the **illusion** that somehow it is preferable to be involved solely in personally studying the Rebbe's teachings whereas the Rebbe also pleaded with us to get **Am Yisroel** ready for Geula and we will redeem "the Sh'china [which] is in exile and all of Am Yisroel [which] is in galus." There is no room for your calculations here.

Chazak, chazak, v'nischazek!

A FREE THINKER, BUT NOT AN APIKORUS!

By Yitzchok Wagshul

A major theme of Sukkos is the unity of all Jews. Surely, everyone knows the famous *sicha* in which the Rebbe explains that each of the *Dalet minim*—the four species of Sukkos—represents a different type of Jew: the *esrog*, which has both taste and aroma, symbolizes those who have both Torah knowledge and *mitzvos*; the *lulav*, which (coming from a date palm) has taste but no aroma, represents those Jews who have Torah but not as many *mitzvos*; the *hadas*, which has aroma but no taste, stands for those who perform *mitzvos* even though they do not have much Torah knowledge; and the *arava*, which lacks both taste and aroma, symbolizes Jews who, for whatever reason, do not have much of either Torah or *mitzvos*. The *mitzva* of the four species requires that all four be held together; otherwise the *mitzva* has not been accomplished. The Rebbe teaches that, in the same way, the Jewish people is one, no matter where one stands on the continuum of Torah

knowledge and *mitzva* observance.

The *sukka* itself conveys the same idea. Sitting in the *sukka* shows that we are all equal; no matter who we are, the walls encompass us all in the same way.

As Lubavitchers, we were raised to believe (literally, if brought up in a Chabad household, or at least figuratively, if not) that every single Jew is pure and holy, truly a part of G-d above. No one would sin (What? *Sin*? What are you, crazy?) unless overcome by a spirit of folly, fooling him- or herself into thinking that G-d doesn't mind. But, oh, that spirit of folly — beware of it! As we recently said in the Yom Kippur *davening*, “As clay in the hand of the molder... so are we in Your Hand [O, Hashem].” A person can't control — and often isn't even aware of — what unseen forces shape his or her life and influence his or her circumstances and behavior. But wherever a person may stand outwardly on the continuum of Jewish observance, or

whatever one's politics, we are pure, we are holy, we are Hashem's. This is a good thought for Sukkos, the holiday of unity.

I have some stories I like that I want to share with you. They all bear on this theme, and illustrate that, come what may, a Jew is a Jew is a Jew.

I'M NOT AN APIKORUS!

This first story goes back, if memory serves, to 1976, Yom Kippur 5737. I was a *bachur* in *yeshiva* then, and although I grew up in New Jersey, I was spending Yom Kippur in Crown Heights. A friend and I were sitting on a bench along Eastern Parkway, trying to rest a bit and get some fresh air during the break between *Musaf* and *Mincha*, when my attention was drawn to a minor commotion taking shape on the sidewalk in front of 770. I watched with interest as the following incident unfolded:

In Crown Heights in those days there lived an elderly gentleman





Illustration

“What are you bothering for?” this fellow accosted the bachurim, who had come out for a break between Musaf and Mincha. “You think G-d cares what you pray or what you do? Go home and have a good meal!”

whose name I’ve forgotten, but who was not a religious man at all. In fact, he seemed to delight in belittling religion (*r”l*) to anyone who would listen. He wore no beard, and his bare face had a ruddy complexion; he wore no *yarmulke*, and, when not covered by a hat, his balding head glistened in the sunlight. It seems this fellow had been strolling along Eastern Parkway from the direction of Brooklyn Avenue. He was wearing leather shoes. His face seemed more flushed than usual, as though he’d just finished a hearty meal; all he was missing to round out the picture was a cigar. When he came to 770, he encountered the first of several small clusters of *bachurim* and others who had come out onto the sidewalk during the break.

“What are you bothering for?” this fellow accosted them. “You think G-d cares what you pray or what you do? Go home and have a good meal!”

Well, you can’t expect to say that

to a group of Lubavitcher *bachurim* on Yom Kippur and get away without an argument. They stared at him in shock for a moment, then began remonstrating with him: He should do *t’shuva*; he should believe in G-d; today is Yom Kippur, etc.

Needless to say, they did not persuade him. In fact, he enjoyed this sort of discussion; no doubt it was what he’d been looking forward to. He finished up with the first group of *bachurim* and moved a little farther along the sidewalk until he met the second.

“What are you bothering for?” the fellow accosted them. “You think G-d cares what you pray?” The same thing all over again. He loved it! He had the same debate with these new people, then moved on to the next group. I watched in fascination as this scene repeated itself all along the man’s progress toward Kingston Avenue.

Finally, he found himself near the corner. I had actually come over to listen, so I witnessed this clearly. A *chassidishe* little boy had also noticed what was going on, and was listening in disbelief. Here was the very person his mother had always warned him about, he was probably thinking. The bogeyman, the devil, the dread... *apikorus!* Just to make sure, the child scampered over and, in the half-frightened, half-excited way a small child might reach out to pet an animal, he blurted, “*vos bist du, a apikorus?*” [What are you, a heretic?] No sooner had the words left his mouth than the boy, terrified,

turned on his heels and fled. The man, engrossed in his conversation, absently answered, “*ya, ya*” [yes, yes].

And then — I only realized the significance of this afterward — the man suddenly realized what he’d just said and interrupted his conversation, turned abruptly, and called out after the running child, “A free thinker. I’m a free thinker!”

Can you imagine that? Here’s a fellow, to all appearances fresh from his ham sandwich, flagrantly desecrating the holiest day of the year and urging others to do the same, yet when you ask him point blank if he is an *apikorus* — a heretic who denies G-d — he cannot accept that. “No,” he cries out, “I’m not an *apikorus!* I really believe Hashem doesn’t mind, I’m a free thinker — but to deny Hashem, to call me an *apikorus* — never!”

Now, that’s a Jew!

HE PUTS DOWN HIS KNIFE AND HE SAYS THE SHMA

One of my first jobs after getting married was in a locksmith store, where I met my coworker, Pete. To tell the truth, I don’t really remember his name, but “Pete” seems to fit. So would Billy, or Rocco, or Tom—whatever it was, it was a typical name for a non-Jew. He would stand behind the counter and copy keys for customers, or he would bring in boxes from the storage area to the shop.

Just to make sure, the child scampered over and blurted, “vos bist du, a apikorus?” The man, engrossed in his conversation, absently answered, “ya, ya.” Suddenly realizing what he’d just said, the man interrupted his conversation and called after him, “A free thinker. I’m a free thinker!”

Pete and his mother lived alone in a high-crime neighborhood in the Bronx. The locksmith shop was in lower Manhattan, and he had to leave early in the morning for the long subway ride to work. He’d arrive in his work clothes: dungarees, construction boots — and a combat knife in a sheath on his belt. I once asked him what the knife was for, and he said, “In case I get in a fight.”

He’d had a hard life, this Pete. I think his father had run away when he was very young, or was drunk, or something like that. Pete was no genius anyway, so it wasn’t that great a loss when he dropped out of high school in order to work. But it showed in the way he talked: Pete spoke a coarse, uneducated English and only had to say a few words before you realized you were talking to a member of the lower classes. A favorite expression of his was, “Don’t be a idiot”—which he pronounced, “idiyit.” He thought his mother was being taken advantage of by someone, and I overheard his well-meaning advice on the phone, “Don’t be a idiot, Ma. Don’t sign. Don’t be a idiot.”

All in all, my impression of him was of a tough kid with a good heart, a denizen of some housing project or trailer park whom I was seeing in his work setting.

I had only been at that job a few

days, when Pete struck up a conversation. There was no place to get kosher food around there, so I used to bring a brown paper bag with sandwiches. One day, as I got out my lunch bag, Pete looked up and asked, “What do you eat?”

What do I eat? What a strange question, I thought. Then I realized he was probably curious about Jewish food. Every day, he’d been going off to the *treife* place next door, and he’d noticed me—with my strange-looking beard, and my beanie, and the funny strings hanging out of my pants—getting out a bag of special food from home.

“I know why you’re asking me that,” I replied with a smile. “Because of kosher food, right? You want to know why Jews only eat certain foods.”

“Oh, no, I know all about that,” said Pete. “I’m Jewish, too.”

I hope my eyes didn’t pop out, like in the comics. It wouldn’t have been polite. But I sure was floored, I can tell you that. This guy really, *really* didn’t look Jewish.

“I don’t know a lot about being Jewish,” Pete continued. “I never went to school or anything like that. But my mother taught me one of the prayers, and I say it every night before I go to bed. Here, listen to this.”

And he puts his hand over his eyes, and he sings out, in that age-

old melody and the earnest voice of a child, “Shma Yisroel, Ado—Elokeinu, Ado—Echad.”

I almost collapsed. I was speechless. In fact, I’m speechless now, as I write this. You never know, you really just never know. But one thing is certain: A Jew is a Jew is a Jew.

Oh, Hashem! Look at us! It’s been almost two thousand years, and we still cling to You — we’ll never let go. We stagger along, limping and bleeding, with almost all memory of things Jewish pounded out of us, yet we are like Pete: we struggle our way through life, we fight our way home on the subway, and at night, when all is quiet, we still unstrap our knife, put it on the bedstand, and softly sing out, “Shma Yisroel, Ado—Elokeinu, Ado—Echad.”

Oh, Hashem! What are You waiting for?

WHEN I TURNED BACK, THEY HAD DISAPPEARED

Another early job was as a teacher in a girls’ high school. I had been hired to teach *Chassidus*, but as things turned out, I became more of a guidance counselor than anything else. The girls were from troubled, mostly secular, backgrounds, and I tried my best to help them work things through and to point them in the right direction in life. Some of them, I’m pleased to say, have remained in touch over the years.

One woman in particular, who is now a grandmother (no, I’m not that ancient—they were young!), has had a very difficult life. She calls every few years to stay connected and to hear a friendly voice; she knows I welcome her unconditionally. She lives in a remote part of Michigan, and I got some idea how tough things were the time she confided that she’s grateful to have food — in the cold of winter, her non-Jewish husband

goes out into the woods and hunts venison so they can eat.

Once, my former student called me sounding very depressed. Everything, it seemed, was almost too difficult to bear, and I was afraid she was contemplating suicide, *chas v'shalom*. We spoke for a while, and among the things we discussed was her statement that she tried to get comfort from the Bible. The problem was, she only had a copy of the non-Jewish Bible!

I told her I would send her Jewish books. I didn't have much money myself, so I was limited in what I could do, but I determined to send at least some of the most important things it seemed she needed. She wanted to read the Bible, so of course I would send a *Tanach*. I advised her that one of the most powerful ways a Jew in distress can communicate with Hashem is through sincere, heartfelt prayer and through reciting Psalms, so I'd send a Hebrew-English *siddur* and *T'hillim*. She had questions about spirituality and Judaism, so I included a basic book I picked out at Judaica World here in Crown Heights. And, I thought, this woman needs to be able to write to the Rebbe. Let me send her an English volume of the *Igros Kodesh*.

Back then, there were only three volumes of the *Igros* available in English, but I couldn't send them all for financial reasons. As I stood in the store gathering all these *s'farim*, I suddenly realized what a great responsibility I was undertaking. I was about to select one out of three possible volumes of the Rebbe's letters, which, by *hashgacha pratis* (Divine providence), would surely contain the Rebbe's blessings and

I turned around and made my way back to where I'd left my pile of Igros Kodesh. Sure enough, they were right where I'd left them — with one difference: there was only one book there.

answers for this particular person. Which was it? Which volume should I choose?

I went over to the shelf where they kept the English *Igros*, and I took down all three volumes. I leafed through them trying to find anything relevant, but I quickly gave that up. I couldn't possibly read all three volumes, and even if I could, who was I to make such a determination? Not knowing what else to do, I put the volumes down — I left them in a pile near the place I'd taken them from — and walked to the front of the store, where it was private and I could say a *capital* of *T'hillim*.

I turned away from the interior of the store, closed my eyes, and said *T'hillim*, asking Hashem to guide me in choosing the right volume of *Igros* for my student. I think I said *capital Chaf*, which is all of ten *p'sukim* long. I just timed it now, for this article, saying it very slowly, and it took less than a minute and a half. It couldn't possibly have taken me more than a couple of minutes back there in the store. I turned around and made my way back to where I'd left my pile of *Igros Kodesh*. Sure enough, they were right where I'd left them — with one difference: there was only one book there. Two volumes had disappeared!

I quickly looked up, thinking someone had come along just while I was gone and taken the other two books; I figured, given the brief time that had passed, that I'd see them walking away. But no — there was no one anywhere near there. It seems inconceivable anyway that, in just a minute and a half or so, someone could swoop in, snatch up just two of three books from a pile, say, "yes, these are what I want," and turn around and leave so quickly that they were no longer even in the vicinity. Likewise, a store clerk would probably not have performed a lightning-fast reshelfing in such a short time, and if one did, why reshelf two books and leave the third out? I was mighty puzzled, to say the least.

But at least my dilemma was resolved: clearly, this was the *Igros* to send. And that's just what I did.

May Hashem, in His infinite Mercy, always look upon us all with the same benevolent *hashgacha pratis*, the same loving attention to our every need, and grant us all—all of *Klal Yisroel*, of whom every one is a Jew is a Jew is a Jew—a *gut yom tov* and a good year. May He do for us as He did for my student: connect us all with our Rebbe, with the immediate revelation of *Moshiach* now!

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WELCOMING THE HOLY SUKKOS GUESTS

By B. Yisroel

Some of the Rebbe's explanations of the general and Chassidishe Ushpizin and the connection between them. Based on the sichos of the nights of Sukkos 5752 and the sichos of Sukkos 5747.

There was a Chassid of the Alter Rebbe whom the Alter Rebbe lovingly nicknamed, “my baal gaava.” The Chassidim were taken aback by this. What connection is there between a Chassid and gaava (pride)? These are opposites! But this Chassid used his pride to make progress in Torah and mitzvos. He would say, “I, a great Chassid such as me, shouldn’t clearly know the Torah the Rebbe said on Shabbos?!” “A wealthy man like me shouldn’t host Chassidim and those who learn Torah in my house?” “Someone like me shouldn’t give the largest sum to Kupas Rabbeinu?” and so on. Pride like this is, indeed, a special and endearing quality.

The month of Elul has passed and Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur are also behind us. We are about to celebrate the happiest holiday of the year, the holiday that contains so much within it, the holiday that gathers together within us everything we received thus far – the Chag HaAsif (harvest holiday, i.e. Sukkos).

The Rebbe taught us that the name of something conveys its essence and so the name of a holiday as it is called in the Torah is of great significance in our avoda. The Chag HaAsif teaches us that the harvest is not only about wheat. There is a harvest within us, a gathering of all thoughts, speech,



Painting by Zalman Kleiman

and actions and the instilling of holiness within them.

The Rebbe instructs us how this needs to be done. Building on the sichos of Elul and the beginning of Tishrei in which he discussed the various kinds of avoda – “Above to below” and “below to Above,” the Rebbe continues to demand these approaches from us on Sukkos too. We need to draw down the G-dly light through actions, speech, and thoughts devoted exclusively to Hashem - a drawing down from Above to below. In simple words: an increase in Torah and mitzvos according to each one’s ability.

At the same time, we need to use things of this world for holiness so as to “raise up from below,” to be like that baal gaava and take the most physical and “worldly” place and harness it in the service of Hashem. When we succeed in bringing k’dusha into our actions, speech and thoughts, then we have with what to celebrate the tremendous joy of Sukkos.



There was a Chassid the Alter Rebbe lovingly nicknamed, “my baal gaava.” He would say, “A great Chassid such as me shouldn’t know the Torah the Rebbe said on Shabbos?!” “A wealthy man like me shouldn’t host those who learn Torah in my house?” “Someone like me shouldn’t give the largest sum to Kupas Rabbeinu?” and so on.

OPEN UP FOR ME

Until the sicha of the first night of Sukkos, 1936, we thought that we only host seven Ushpizin. After that sicha we realized that another seven guests are present - the seven Chassidishe Ushpizin, our Rebbeim, each of whom represents for us a unique approach in avodas Hashem.

The word “orach” implies two things. On the one hand, it means a guest, “the guest leads the bentching

so as to bless the balabus,” the awareness that Hashem is in charge and He is the one we should bless. In addition, there is “orach” from the root meaning road – through the two drachim mentioned earlier – “from Above downward” and by raising up everything to G-dliness, “from below Upwards” - Hashem becomes the Balabus.

Every night of Sukkos, 5752, the Rebbe explained the inyanim of the

Ushpizin of that night, the connection between them, and the lesson for us. Although this has been said before, Torah is supposed to be new to us every day and I hope that by reviewing these concepts we will be able to discover new aspects to our avoda and implement them.

The first pair is **Avrohom Avinu** and the **Baal Shem Tov**. The point they have in common is their being the first; they opened the door for those who followed them. The beginning is the hardest of all and after that you can do things more easily. Avrohom began spreading the knowledge of one G-d in the world and the Baal Shem Tov revealed Toras HaChassidus.

In 5752 the Rebbe added the Geula dimension to the first night of Sukkos. Fortunate are we that we have a forefather, Avraham, to whom Hashem made a promise which He will never retract. Who knows where we would be if not for that? When we say, “Blessed is He who keeps his promise to Israel,” we are mentioning that ancient promise that He gave to Avrohom that his sons would be redeemed. If not for this assurance, the great Divine delight from our avoda in the time of galus would keep us in galus indefinitely. But now there is no choice, for Hashem gave His word to Avrohom and for a father like that Hashem is sure to keep His promise.

The part of the Baal Shem Tov in the fulfillment of this promise is the transformation of the Geula to a supernatural level. When the Baal Shem Tov is the one responsible for opening the door to Geula, then surely the Geula will be happen in the same way that the Baal Shem Tov led his life - supernaturally, without taking the limitations of the world into consideration. But this time, it won’t appear different or miraculous for this will be the accepted way of life.

The Chag HaAsif teaches us about the harvest within us, a gathering of all thoughts, speech, and actions and the instilling of holiness within them.

LAUGHTER AND TORAH

The point in common between **Yitzchok Avinu** and the **Rav HaMaggid** seems minor until the Rebbe shows us otherwise. Yitzchok, unlike the other Ushpizin, never left Eretz Yisroel even temporarily. Similarly, the Maggid stayed in Mezritch. Unlike the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid did not travel around but led the world from his place. His disciples came from all over and spread his teachings across the globe. He sat in Mezritch and his net was cast until Yerushalayim.

Staying in one place did not limit their influence; on the contrary, the spreading of Elokus gave them their power over the world and transformed Yitzchok and the Maggid into balabatim in every place that their influence reached.

This G-dly influence is what brings us closer to the time when “our mouths will be filled with laughter,” the time of Geula. But that isn’t enough. When Chazal say, “Blessed is Hashem who gave a three-fold Torah to a three-fold nation through three,” they connected the number three to Torah. It seems that connection already traces back to the birth of **Yaakov Avinu**.

Yaakov, the third of the Avos, was the first to establish a yeshiva and he appointed Levi, his third son, to teach Torah and to ensure that his children would not forget what they learned. After the opening of the channel by Avrohom and the revelation for G-dliness by Yitzchok, the time came to draw G-dliness into the world through Yaakov. The

only way to do this was through Torah and mitzvos.

Like Yaakov, the **Alter Rebbe’s** connection to Torah is clear. His name “Shneur” means “two lights,” the light of Nigleh and the light of Nistar. The drawing down of the G-dly light into the world and the general running of the world is possible only through Torah, as will become truly manifest in the time of Geula.

WHAT’S NEW?

After the opening of the channel (Avrohom and the Baal Shem Tov), the spreading of Elokus (Yitzchok and the Maggid), and the illumination of the world through Torah (Yaakov and the Alter Rebbe), the time came to receive the Torah through **Moshe Rabbeinu** in a whole new way.

True, it was all given to Moshe at Sinai, including everything a veteran student will ever innovate in learning, but there is still an advantage to revelation, to bringing something from the potential form to the actual with chiddushim, pilpul, learning one thing out of another, and finding reasons for things. We need to be grateful for this gift, which was not predetermined. Pilpul was the exclusive province of Moshe Rabbeinu until he decided to act with a “generous eye” and bestow it to us. We need to be grateful for this and at the same time, know that the gift was given to be put to use. True, we must devote time to review what we already learned, but that does not stand in place of the need to

innovate, to use the gift we were given in the proper way.

The Chassidishe Ushpizin for this night is the **Mitteler Rebbe** – “the width of the river,” spreading forth Chassidus in length, breadth, and depth. The maamarim of the Mitteler Rebbe are characterized by their expansive explanations, by their depth and their length. No more short teachings; no limiting the focus on a few talmidim. This is the proper preparation for the time when a “new Torah will go forth from Me” “and the earth will be full of the knowledge of G-d like the waters cover the sea.”

WITH LOVE

In the HaYom Yom it is clear that Ahavas Yisroel surpasses love for Hashem. That’s the way it is when you love what Hashem loves. This is what **Aharon HaKohen** is about. The Kohanim bless the people with love.

You can learn Torah and make chiddushim but we need to remember that there are people who are distant from Hashem’s Torah. They need to be drawn in with “ropes of love.” Much needs to be done so that the Torah, with all its chiddushim, reaches them too.

It is Aharon who does this kiruv, which is interesting because he is on the highest spiritual level. It is he who enters the Holy of Holies once a year and yet it is he who speaks with the simplest people and is mekarev them to Torah. He raises them up, not with threats and anger but with love.

The same is true for the Tzemach Tzedek, the Chassidishe Ushpiz for this day. His love and concern for every Jew, his concern for a proper chinuch and his activities to unite Jewry made him, like Aharon, someone who loved all Jews and was mekarev them to Torah.

This is what is demanded of us -

to not worry only about ourselves as long as another Jew is waiting for us to be mekarev him. This is how we merit the “bless us, our Father, all of us as one.”

If we examine the order of avoda until now, the days of Sukkos present an ordered form of avoda from the general to the particular, starting from the general avoda of drawing down and revealing the G-dly light, then Torah study and the fulfillment of mitzvos, and then relating to those who are called “creatures,” since they are far from Torah.

Now, on the sixth day, we need a special avoda in which we take those parts of the world that oppose holiness and transform them into good. The Ushpiz on the sixth day is **Yosef HaTzaddik**, “Yosef Hashem li ben acher,” to transform the “acher” – the world and its materialism – into a “ben,” a place of k’dusha, so that it is apparent that it belongs to Hashem.

This is the way of avoda with every Jew – even if someone outwardly looks like “acher,” our job is to be mekarev him and reveal his p’nimius, which is that he is the son of the King, Hashem.

The **Rebbe Maharash** coined the phrase “I’chat’chilla aribber” – a most apt description to describe the type of avoda that we learn about on this day of Yom Tov. We don’t relate at all to the “acher,” the “otherness” in the world. From our perspective it doesn’t have any substance. The

True, it was all given to Moshe at Sinai, including everything a veteran student will ever innovate in learning, but there is still an advantage to revelation, to bringing something from the potential form to the actual with chiddushim, pilpul, learning one thing out of another, and finding reasons for things.

only thing that we relate to is the way in which the world is a vessel for G-dliness.

This type of avoda in the world and with the Jewish people leads to our seeing how the world becomes a place in which “you are children of Hashem your G-d” is clearly seen.

CONCLUSION

The last of the Ushpizin is **Dovid HaMelech**. Being the last, he incorporates within him all aspects of avoda from the first revelation of Hashem’s light in the world until the true and complete Geula. Corresponding to him is the **Rebbe Rashab**. The inyan of both of them is Moshiach – one is the person from who Moshiach will descend and the other assigned his talmidim the task for waging the war of the “house of Dovid” against those who mock the “footsteps of Your anointed one.” The goal is the same:

to bring out the revelation of Melech HaMoshiach. That is the purpose of all the days of Sukkos, and the only remaining avoda.

After the work of the seven general Ushpizin and the seven Chassidishe Ushpizin, the guests who are with us during Sukkos, the Rebbe teaches us that it is time to welcome another guest, the **Rebbe Rayatz**, to know that the avoda of birurim is over, the buttons were polished and we are “standing all at the ready,” ready for the moment when we can say “hinei Melech HaMoshiach ba.” Ready for a time when every Jew will be able to point and say, “the Baal Shem Tov is sitting here, the Maggid is sitting here, the Alter Rebbe is sitting here ... the Rebbe Rayatz is sitting here, and the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach leads them, with the true and complete Geula.”

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TO 770 ON THE WINGS OF EAGLES

By Nosson Avrohom

Crown Heights was bustling with visitors, including an impressive number of families, this past Tishrei. Neither the high prices nor the oftentimes uncomfortable housing arrangements kept these thousands of Chassidim away.

Shluchim also made great efforts to participate in at least one of the holidays of Tishrei or Shabbos B'Reishis. Some even brought along mekuravim so they could experience a Tishrei in Lubavitch.

At the many farbrengens that took place nearly every day and night, especially during Sukkos, many of the guests, particularly the veterans, described Tishreis in years past. Those were days suffused with Chassidishe hergeishim and a deep, inner hiskashrus. Participants also related miracles and unusual experiences.

At those marvelous farbrengens that lasted late into the chilly New York night, we did not only hear nostalgic reminiscences of days gone by. The present also had a place of honor.

I was in the right place at the right time to hear the following story from a shliach to a big city in Eretz Yisroel, who had come with his wife

for Sukkos after spending Tishrei far from 770 for eight years. For some reason he did not want his name to be used but I will repeat the story as I heard him tell it.

This shliach would not have dreamed of the possibility of coming for Tishrei but the ongoing advertising of the organization "Uniting Chassidim for Kabbalas P'nei Moshiach" about the importance of traveling to the Rebbe, especially in a Hakhel year, inspired him. The problem was that he is busier than ever at this time of the year and so he consoled himself with the thought that he would go for the Kinus HaShluchim.

"Then I spoke with a friend before Rosh HaShana. At the end of the conversation he asked me to do something, and he said that if I did as he asked he would pay for a ticket for me to be able to fly to Beis Chayeinu for Tishrei.

"I had no plans to go for Tishrei, but his request was easy and I agreed to do it even without his offer. When I hung up the phone the offer sank in. I immediately told my wife and her reaction was, 'Why should we lose out? You will be

going to the Kinus HaShluchim in a little while. When will I get to go to the Rebbe?'

"She was right. Since I am not the only shliach in my city, I could permit myself to appoint substitutes and go away for Tishrei. I promised my wife that we would fly together with our young daughter. So we went from one ticket to three.

"This was already a day before Rosh HaShana and my wife did not have a visa for the US and my daughter did not even have a passport. And we didn't know whether that generous Chassid who was willing to pay for my ticket would be willing to triple his offer. One thing I do know and that is that what happened until the flight took off was amazing and I can't get over it.

"Things happened in such an unusual way that we felt that were marionettes on strings. I left my house and on the stairs I met a neighbor who is a travel agent. I brought him my wife's passport and asked him to make her an appointment with the American consulate as soon as possible so she could get a visa.

"We had decided that if we flew





I told him about the trip to 770 and I promised to mention his name to the Rebbe. 'If you don't issue us a passport, we will all have to stay home.' This seemed to convince him.

it would be on Chol HaMoed Sukkos. Unfortunately, getting an appointment at the American consulate could take anywhere from a few weeks to two months.

"From that point on we felt that the Rebbe wanted us to visit him for Tishrei. Just a few hours went by when an employee at the travel agency called my wife and said she made an appointment for her at the consulate for 7 Tishrei. We were relieved. Now we only had to arrange a passport and visa for our daughter.

"It was Erev Rosh HaShana and I was over my head with work at the Chabad house. My wife, who went to the Interior Ministry to stand on line, called me after a very short time and said that the manager of the branch was irritable and whoever went into his office was sent out empty-handed. He made it clear that

on Erev Yom Tov he was not willing to issue passports. The people who worked there also had families and he intended on letting them leave earlier than usual. All passports would be issued after Yom Tov.

"I finished what I had to do and went to the branch. I was happy to discover that I had met the branch manager just two weeks earlier through a mutual friend and I hoped this would be to my advantage. I went in and he remembered me immediately, but after I asked for a passport for my daughter he declared that he could do nothing at that time.

"I told him about the trip to 770 and I promised to mention his name to the Rebbe. 'If you don't issue us a passport, we will all have to stay home.' This seemed to convince him. He asked me to wait outside and come back in two hours. When

we returned, the passport was ready. This was truly amazing since the Interior Ministry usually sends it through the mail after a week. We were excited because we saw how the Rebbe was running the show.

"Our next problem was more complicated. How would we get her a visa? When we went back to the travel agency with the unrealistic request that they also get my daughter an appointment for a visa, the employees laughed but they agreed to try. How amazed they were when after Yom Tov they were told that she could come together with my wife.

"Throughout this time we tried to reach the Lubavitcher who had offered to pay for my ticket but were unsuccessful. My plan was to ask him to triple the amount but I knew that if I was unable to speak to him, I wouldn't even have one ticket!

"It was the Sunday after Rosh HaShana and I said to myself, if the Rebbe chose me to visit him, I will go in a way of l'chat'chilla aribber. That same day I was able reach that Chassid and to update him. He thought about it briefly and agreed to pay half of the sum total of the tickets.

"I somehow tried to be calm despite the financial burden I had to contend with. On Monday, the day my wife and daughter had an appointment at the American consulate, I got an answer from that generous Chassid that he was willing to add to the amount he was giving me and pay for 2/3 of the total price of the tickets. A stone rolled off my heart. It wasn't the entire amount and the remaining money would be difficult for me to pay, but things were moving in the right direction.

"However, all did not go easily. When my wife was at the consulate, she was sent to a severe looking clerk who said he would approve a visa but it would be sent by mail and would arrive in a few days. When he

I warmly thanked him and left with the feeling that the entire world was only created for my sake. It seemed like all protocol and all bureaucracy disappeared in order to enable a Chassid to travel to the Rebbe.

heard that she needed the visa as soon as possible because we had already bought tickets for Chol HaMoed Sukkos, he said, 'Why did you buy tickets before you knew that you had a visa?' The only concession he would make was to send the visa by express mail.

"We considered the entire course of events astounding from the beginning and we believed things would work out well. That day I called a friend who worked in the branch of the post office in my city and I asked him what I could do to get the visa as fast as possible. He asked me what sort of mailing I was talking about and he promised that by ten o'clock the next day he would know where the envelope with the visa was, based on the stub I had for registered mail.

"The next morning he made calls to his friends at the various transit stations in the postal system, going from clerk to clerk, talking to employees and managers. They all looked for the envelope with two precious visas in it. Towards the evening of the day before Erev Yom Kippur, while I was busy at the Chabad house, he called me and said that his friend had located the envelope. He gave me his name and cell phone number and asked me to call him quickly since he had already finished work for the day and was waiting for me.

"I quickly called him and he said he would wait until I came, even though he had finished work and I did not live close to his office. I

warmly thanked him and left with the feeling that the entire world was only created for my sake. It seemed like all protocol and all bureaucracy disappeared in order to enable a Chassid to travel to the Rebbe.

"I returned home with the visas and met a neighbor, who is also a travel agent, a lovely woman who is not yet religious. When I showed her the passports and the visas, she was astounded. She told me that she had tried to obtain a same-day visa for a lieutenant colonel in the army and was unsuccessful and yet I, a simple person without rank or connections, had managed to obtain a visa in a single day.

"The next day, Erev Yom Kippur, the Chassid gave me the money he had promised, but I was still lacking \$1200 to pay the full amount. Maybe this doesn't seem like such a large sum, but for a shliach, to whom every penny is important, this was a lot of money, especially with another expensive ticket on the horizon for the Kinus HaShluchim.

"After Yom Kippur the first thing I did was to call my mashpia. On the one hand, we had seen how the Rebbe was running things. On the other hand, I still needed a large sum of money. The mashpia heard all the details and then said he did not understand what I was nervous about. 'Up until now you have seen how everything happened in an unusual way, so why are you now suddenly worried?' He suggested that I tell some people the story and I would see that not only would I

have the money I needed but I would even have enough for additional expenditures during the visit.

"In the next few days, I saw what the power of a mashpia is. A few minutes afterwards, someone called who had heard I was flying to the Rebbe and wanted to send a pidyon nefesh with me to the Rebbe. He gave me a sum of money as his participation in my trip. Then more and more people asked to write to the Rebbe and made donations. By ten in the morning on the day of our flight I counted the money and saw that I had more than the amount that I needed, just as my mashpia had told me.

"When I got on the plane I was exultant. All the events of the previous two weeks had come together and I felt that the Rebbe wanted me to come and visit him!

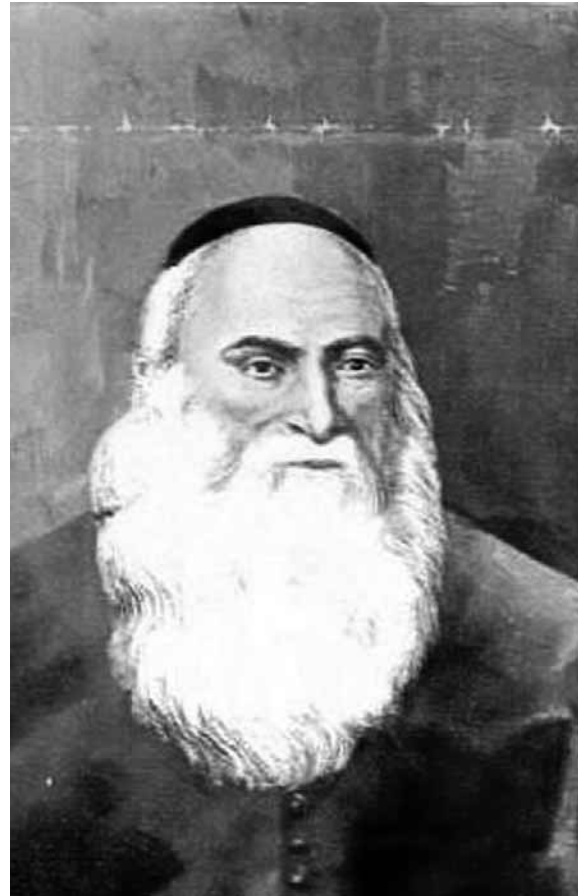
"In order that this feeling would not just remain a Chassidishe hergesh, the Rebbe gave me a clear sign. At the Chabad house in the airport in Lud which is run by R' Nachman Maidanchek there is a video of scenes from 770. Before boarding the plane I sat and watched the video when suddenly, a selection from Kos shel Bracha 5752 appeared on the screen and I saw myself as a bachur, standing near the Rebbe. When I saw that, I was overcome by emotion."

This shliach still doesn't believe that he was able to spend Sukkos 5769 with the Rebbe. He felt he was being led by the hand. The uplifting experience of being with thousands of Chassidim from around the world, brimming with emuna and yearning to see the Rebbe with the hisgalus of Moshiach, is one he took back with him to his place of shlichus in order to be mekasher the people of his city to the Rebbe and to prepare them for the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH" M now!

DON YITZCHOK ABARBANEL: A BESURAS HA'GEULA PIONEER

By Yehoshua Kenig

*Highlights of the fascinating life of Don Yitzchok Abarbanel, one of the great commentators on Tanach, as well as a philosopher, financier and leader, who used his political connections on behalf of his brethren. His three s'farim on Geula are the first to address the Geula process. In an era that was fraught with difficulties for the Jewish people, he strengthened their faith in Moshiach and fanned the embers of their anticipation of his imminent coming. * Next in a series on G'dolei Yisroel and Anticipating the Geula.*



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Toledo

Three kings, a libel, an expulsion and French occupation, royal riches, abject poverty and wandering – all this serves as the dramatic backdrop for the life story of Rabbi Don Yitzchok Abarbanel, known simply as the Abarbanel.

He was descended from one of the most illustrious families in Spain, which had a scroll and a seal that traced the family's ancestral lineage back to Dovid HaMelech. According to tradition, the family arrived on the Iberian Peninsula after the destruction of the first Beis HaMikdash.

R' Yitzchok Abarbanel was born in Lisbon in 1437. His father, Don Yehuda, was the Minister of the Treasury of Alfonso V, king of Portugal. He said of his youth, "I was raised in wealth and honor... with kings and advisors of the land, in their courtyards and palaces... Torah and greatness, servants and maids." He expressed his overwhelming sense of thanks to Hashem for His many kindnesses in the words of Dovid HaMelech, "for

I know not how to count them."

He studied Torah primarily from Rabbi Yosef ben Avrohom Chiyun. While still a young man he began writing on Torah and philosophy. At that time he wrote *Ateres Z'keinim* on the Torah and *Tzuras HaYesodos*, a philosophical work about Divine Providence, the life of the soul after death, the world and nature, etc. which is based on and compiled from the books of the early great philosophers: the Rambam, Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi, and others.

MINISTER OF THE PORTUGUESE TREASURY

Like his father, Don Yitzchok worked as a financier while he simultaneously continued to learn Torah. At the age of 25 he began to serve as the lecturer at shul. At this time, he began writing a commentary on Chumash D'varim that he called *Markeves HaMishna*, but when his father died and he was appointed Minister of the royal Treasury in his place, he had to stop

writing.

By virtue of his position and influence, Don Yitzchok helped many of his fellow Jews. He protected their property and strengthened them and their faith.

King Alfonso was nicknamed the African for conquering many parts of North Africa. During his wars in Morocco, his soldiers captured 250 Jews from the city of Arizela and they were brought to Portugal in chains.

R' Yitzchok worked to raise money to redeem these captives and after they were redeemed he sustained them for two years until they learned the language and could support themselves.

The peaceful period in Portugal ended with the death of Alfonso V and the rise to power of his son John II. The new king wanted to limit the authority of the nobles and his actions aroused much unrest among the noblemen of Portugal. The noblemen and ministers planned to overthrow the king with the help of the king of Spain, but the plot was

FROM EXPULSION TO GEULA

The expulsion from Spain was one of the important factors in the development of an awareness of Geula and the anticipation of its coming. The expulsion was also influential in the spread of Kabbala, which paved the way for the revelation of Chassidus. The spreading of p'nimius ha'Torah hastens the Geula and is a fitting preparation for the "Torah chadasha" – the teachings of Moshiach.

The decree of expulsion and their subsequent wandering inspired the Spanish expellees with a tremendous yearning for the Geula. The exiles, spread over many lands, brought with them a yearning for Geula which created a wave of emuna and anticipation for the coming of Moshiach among all Jewish communities.

Don Yitzchok Abarbanel wrote three s'farim on the topic of Geula, how it will come about, and the calculation of the keitz. He told his brethren that the expulsion was not a chance tragedy, heaven forbid, but part of the Geula process. He taught them that the hardships and tzaros were the birth pangs out of which the Geula would come forth.

His s'farim also reached the Anusim of Spain and Portugal. One of the people influenced by his s'farim was the Anus, Shlomo Molcho who read them secretly and was inspired to do t'shuva. He later was moser nefesh to bring the Geula.

Following the expulsion, the study of Kabbala became more widespread. This strengthened people's faith and anticipation of the Geula, which takes on a whole new significance in light of Toras HaNistar. Those expelled from Spain, who were scattered among Jewish communities across the map, had a large share in the disseminating of the teachings of Kabbala, for these teachings were widespread among the scholars of Spain.

Among the exiled kabbalists was Rabbi Avrohom HaLevi from Spain, his brother-in-law, R' Avrohom Zachut who fled from Portugal, and many others. Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz and his son-in-law, Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, among the first kabbalists in Tzfas, were descendents of the Spanish exiles.

The king, who esteemed and needed the services of Don Yitzchok, made him an enticing offer. He would be able to remain in the kingdom as a Jew, along with nine other Jews who would be given special permission to stay so that the indispensable minister could pray with a minyan. He scornfully refused...

discovered. The king was furious.
Any and all ministers and

noblemen whom he suspected were
executed. When Don Yitzchok heard

that he was on the king's list, he ran for his life and his fortune was confiscated by the king.

MINISTER OF THE TREASURY IN SPAIN

Don Yitzchok settled in Toledo, the capitol of Spain at that time, where he began to work on his commentary on Tanach. Over a period of six months, he was able to write a commentary on Yehoshua, Shoftim, and Shmuel, but when he began his work on Melachim he was called to serve as Minister of the Treasury for the king of Spain. Throughout his term in this capacity, he continued to study Torah, some of the time in the yeshiva of Rabbi Yitzchok Abuav.

He held the position of King Ferdinand's Minister of the treasury for eight years, but this did not help him in his time of need.

It was the sunset period following the Golden Age of Spain and Spanish Jewry was being persecuted by the Inquisition and the masses who were incited by the priests. Numerous evil decrees were inflicted and many Jews could not withstand the pressure and outwardly converted, though inwardly they remained loyal to Hashem.

After decades of twilight, night finally descended and hundreds of thousands of Spanish Jews were expelled from their homes.

King Ferdinand II, with the encouragement and pressure of Queen Isabella and Torquemada, Chief Inquisitor, announced: "Within three months, no Jews will remain in Spain."

R' Yitzchok tried to prevent the decree from being implemented. He pleaded and cried and even tried to bribe the king with a huge sum of money, but the king refused to listen.

"When I was there in the king's court, I exerted myself to call out to

the king – once, twice, and three times - ...saying, save us oh king, why are you doing thus to your servants...but as a deaf mute man he closed his ears and did not respond. The queen stands by his side and incites him...”

The king, who esteemed and needed the services of Don Yitzchok, made him an enticing offer. He would be able to remain in the kingdom as a Jew, along with nine other Jews who would be given special permission to stay so that the indispensable minister could pray with a minyan. R' Yitzchok Abarbanel scornfully refused the king and left behind his wealth, going into exile with his brethren. He headed for Italy.

He describes his wanderings painfully, “Without strength, 300,000 people took flight...from young to old, babies and women... and the hand of Hashem was upon them to kill and destroy them...we were sold as slaves and many drowned. Only a few remained. May the name of Hashem be blessed.”

THE MINISTER OF THE TREASURY IN SICILY

Don Yitzchok's oldest son, Rabbi Yehuda, was known as a famous doctor with a wondrous ability to heal. The king, in an effort to compel him to convert and remain in Spain, took his son Yitzchok and baptized him. R' Yehuda was not willing to sell his soul and faith and he fled to Genoa, Italy. Don Yitzchok's second son, Don Yosef, accompanied his father during his travels in Italy and his youngest son Shmuel went to learn Torah in Salonika and died at a young age.

As though expulsion wasn't enough, the evil Ferdinand and Isabella tried to prevent the expelled Jews from settling in Italy. They wrote letters in which they demanded of the rulers not to provide a haven for Jews and to



Naples

return the money the Jews had managed to smuggle out of Spain.

Ferdinand I, ruler of Sicily (with his capitol in Naples) welcomed the Jewish exiles, for he hoped they would improve the economy of the port city of Naples. Don Yitzchok's fame spread in Sicily, too, as a political advisor and talented financier. He became the ruler's advisor, a position that he continued to fill for the next monarch, Ferdinand's son, Alfonso II. In Naples he found the time to continue working on his major commentary on the Tanach and he wrote a commentary to Melachim I and II. In addition, he wrote *Tzedek Olamim* about G-dly justice, following the tragedy of the expulsion.

Even in his high position he did not forget his persecuted brethren and he used his connections and his wealth to help them. Shortly after the Jews came to the city, an epidemic broke out in Naples which killed 20,000 people. This aroused hatred against the Jewish emigrants. Perhaps the weakened Jews were the one who brought the epidemic with them. It was only Don Yitzchok's influence with the king that was finally able to calm the tension.



The order of expulsion of the Jews of Spain

SHEPHERD OF FAITH

As a leader, Don Yitzchok took responsibility to strengthen the unfortunate people who suffered from the expulsion and wandering and experienced spiritual crisis. The suffering of the expulsion brought up thoughts about the uniqueness of the Jewish people and the reasons for its suffering. R' Yitzchok re-ignited the fire of faith and hope in his nation and gave them the strength to withstand the hardships of exile. He planted in them trust in

imminent salvation and vaunted the truth of the coming of Moshiach and the other prophecies, presenting the vision of Geula in its full glory.

Three peaceful years passed for him together with those who arrived to Naples with him but then, once again, trouble was on the horizon. Charles VIII, King of France, went to war against the Spanish nobility in Italy. He conquered Florence, Rome and Naples and wreaked havoc and destruction.

Alfonso II fled to the island of Sicily and Don Yitzchok went along with the young king. His vast wealth, which remained in Naples, was taken by the French army. Once again, he was a poor refugee instead of a wealthy minister.

The fate of those who remained in Naples was bitter. The residents took advantage of the anarchy and went on a rampage in the Jewish neighborhood. Some people were killed, others were forced to convert, and many fled for their lives. Don Yitzchok stayed with King Alfonso in his exile until the latter's death and then traveled to Corfu and from there to the port city of Monopoli bereft of everything.

ALONE IN A FOREIGN LAND

In the following years, R' Yitzchok devoted himself to Torah study. Alone and poverty-stricken in a strange place, he worked on his monumental commentary on Tanach. He first completed his commentary to the book of D'varim and then continued to explain all the books of the Tanach. His unique work soon came to be considered a fundamental commentary for understanding Tanach.

Rather than focus on isolated verses, his work comments on the parsha as a whole. For every book, he wrote an introduction which explains the content, the time it was written and the style. Another

PEARLS OF GEULA FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU DON YITZCHOK ABARBANEL

GOG U'MAGOG

The war of Gog and Magog will be between gentile nations. The Jews will not be involved. The purpose of the war is to take revenge on the enemies of Hashem among the Christians and other nations. The war between the Christians and the Moslems will be a time of tzara for the Jewish people but it is a preparation for the coming of Moshiach and out of it will emerge the true and complete Geula.

THE NATIONS THAT REMAIN

The Geula is a universal process which will lead to *shleimus* (perfection, completion) for the nations of the world too. The gentile nations who will remain after that war will acknowledge that Hashem is G-d and they will all call in the name of Hashem and serve Him. As a direct result of this universal faith, there will be no more wars among nations.

They will help the Jews move to Eretz Yisroel with great honor, as it is written, "And they will bring all your brethren from all the nations as a gift to Hashem with horses and chariots etc." The role of the nations will be, "to shepherd the sheep and cattle of the Jews and work their fields and vineyards." The Jews will be busy serving Hashem with t'filla and learning.

THE TIME OF GEULA

We can hasten the Geula through t'shuva, but when the time comes the Geula will come

in any case, because we will be redeemed with Hashem's kindness. He will purify and circumcise our hearts and all people of the generation will do t'shuva. We will merit this Geula for three reasons: the Avos, the Torah we received at Sinai, and our withstanding the tzaros of galus.

FOUR ADVANTAGES IN GEULA

Abarbanel enumerates four things we will merit in Yemos HaMoshiach: 1) our wisdom which was lost in exile will be restored, 2) Malchus will be restored, 3) Prophecy will return to rest upon many people, 4) the Sh'china will return to rest openly on Yisroel.

This Geula, unlike the Geula from Egypt, will be without any exile after it.

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD – EVEN FOR THE NATIONS

All Jews will be resurrected. Even the wicked who sinned will rise after their sins are atoned for.

Among the nations of the world there will be some celebrated dignitaries who are resurrected. These illustrious non-Jews will tell their countrymen about the truth of Hashem.

THE GREAT DAY OF JUDGMENT

In response to the question about resurrection of the dead, the Rebbe MH"M cites three opinions about the Yom HaDin

which is said to follow the resurrection. One of these views is that of Abarbanel:

1) After the resurrection there will a great Day of Judgment in which people's deeds are judged (Ramban), 2) Every person is judged immediately upon dying. The Yom HaDin after resurrection is a day of carrying out the punishment that was decreed in the judgment after death (Abarbanel), 3) The Yom HaDin is only for the non-Jews. The soul of Jews already went through Yom Kippur, purifying suffering, reincarnation, etc. (Arizal).

MELECH HA'MOSHIACH

Moshiach will be a descendent of Dovid HaMelech. He may be revealed in galus like Moshe and Z'rubavel, who were born in lands of exile and led the Jewish people to Geula. He will rule the entire world. All will obey him and he will not need to exert his power in order to rule the nations.

THE SACRIFICES OF THE DEDICATION OF THE THIRD MIKDASH

In Yechezkel it says which korbanos will be brought at the dedication of the Mikdash, among them special sacrifices for Pesach and Sukkos.

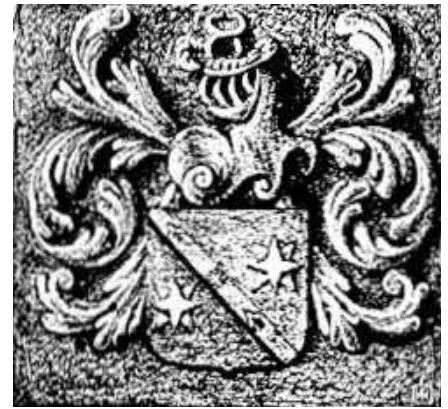
The Abarbanel asks why no such korban is mentioned for Shavuot, Rosh HaShana, Yom Kippur, or Shmini Atzeres? The answer is that these two holidays are especially connected to Geula: Pesach – the first Geula – “in Nissan they were redeemed and in Nissan they will be redeemed,” Sukkos – we read

the Haftora about the war of Gog and Magog.

It is interesting to note the Rebbe's comment on this topic. He says that details about the korbanos are written obliquely because these korbanos are for atonement and depend on the spiritual status of the Jewish people at the time of Geula, so it could not be written ahead of time.

FOURTEEN THEMES ON RESURRECTION

In his introduction to his commentary to the book of Yeshaya, the Abarbanel explains various aspects of the Resurrection, which he divides into 14 basic topics: 1) the truth about the Resurrection, 2) the soul will return to the body that was lost and will be rebuilt, 3) the miraculous manner of the Resurrection, 4) how the body which was lost will be restored, 5) the purpose of Resurrection to experience divine salvation, the purpose for the nations – to correct their mistakes in emuna, 6) who will rise in the Resurrection, 7) the state of the bodies (as they were when they died), 8) those who rise up will recognize their relatives and friends, 9) those that rise will eat and drink and use their physical senses, 10) the wicked and people of the nations that are resurrected will receive their punishment in this world and justify the judgment, 11) arrogance will disappear, 2) kings and ministers will no longer exist and all will be equal like at the time of Creation, 13) all idols and Christianity will be gone, 14) the connection of the Resurrection to the Ingathering of the Exiles.



The family emblem

characteristic of his commentary is the vivid description of the way of life of the Jewish people in the era of the Tanach, along with ideas and examples from his personal, political and communal experiences.

At this time he also wrote books about Creation, the roots of our faith, the fundamentals of our religion, a commentary to *Moreh Nevuchim*, and *Yemos Olam* which was intended to fortify the expellees.

It does not seem that Abarbanel studied Kabbala, for he wrote, “I have no business with the hidden and did not walk on the paths of Kabbala,” and, “I did not learn the wisdom of Kabbala and the wisdom of the holy ones I do not know.” But it is evident that he held the Toras HaNistar in highest esteem, as he writes, “We cannot deny these three things in Torah: understanding the words which are the garment, the intention of the stories which is the body and the hidden secrets in them which is the level of the neshama.”

“A VOICE WHICH HERALDS AND SAYS”

Seeing the need of the hour, R' Yitzchok wrote about Geula, which he defined as “a principle of the Jewish religion and a fundamental of Judaism.” First he wrote *Zevach Pesach*, a commentary on the Hagada shel Pesach which discusses exile and its reasons and the types of



Title page: Maayanei Yeshua



Title page: Mashmia Yeshua

Seeing the need of the hour, R' Yitzchok wrote about Geula, which he defined as "a principle of the Jewish religion and a fundamental of Judaism." He wrote three s'farim about Geula which comprised the first Torah work, and perhaps the only one of its kind, that deals with the Geula process and Yemos HaMoshiach.

Geula and their wonders. Then he wrote three s'farim about Geula which comprised the first Torah work, and perhaps the only one of its kind, that deals with the Geula process and Yemos HaMoshiach.

Due to the many tzaros, R' Yitzchok explained the importance of calculating the end of galus while explaining (like Ramban) that the prohibition to calculate the keitz does not apply now as the time of Geula approaches. He brings a hint to the fact that nowadays we can announce a ketz from a verse in Daniel, "*ad eis keitz* (until the keitz,

the time close to Geula) *yishotetu rabbim v'sirbeh ha'daas* (lit. "let many muse and let knowledge increase," i.e. it is permitted to disclose the keitz).

The first book that he wrote, *Maayanei HaYeshua*, is a commentary to the book of Daniel and his visions of Geula. In this book he also discusses calculating the keitz. Abarbanel calculates that the Geula process will begin in 5263/1503 and conclude in 5291/1531 or 5294/1534. It is interesting to note that the year 5294 marked the birth of the Arizal,

who had a decisive role in the process of revealing p'nimius ha'Torah, a process that will be completed with the true and complete Geula, speedily in our days.

The other two volumes in the trilogy are *Mashmia Yeshua*, which explains the prophecies of Geula and verses in T'hilim that deal with Geula while emphatically negating Christian explanations, and *Yeshuos Meshicho*, which is on statements in the Talmud and Midrash about Geula and Moshiach.

With these books he sought to dispel the feeling of hopelessness that had spread among some of his expelled brethren, as he wrote in his introduction, "For they say: our bones have dried up, our hope is lost." Abarbanel wanted to "strengthen weak hands and reinforce faltering knees," to announce to them that the time for Geula was near.

Another goal for these s'farim was "to demolish Christian beliefs," and he directed this mainly towards the Anusim (forced converts) who lived among Christians. They were meant to weaken the influence of Christianity and to demonstrate the false Messianic claims of its adherents.

The Abarbanel's books on Geula also reached the Anusim in Spain and Portugal and inspired them with hope and anticipation. The fact that he said that the lost and forsaken ones would rise at the resurrection revived the tortured souls of these unfortunate people who did not withstand the test to muster mesirus nefesh and sanctify His name.

Many of the Anusim were inspired by what they read and escaped to Turkey so they could return to their Jewish traditions. The Messianic movements of Reuven HaDani and Shlomo Molcho were also greatly influenced by Abarbanel's books.

In 5263, after eight years of

Torah writing in Monopoli under conditions of penury, R' Yitzchok decided to move northwards to Venice. He was soon asked to use his political abilities and he became a go-between between Venetian merchants and the king of Portugal for the importing of spices from Turkey.

In his brief five year stint there, he managed to leave his imprint and to become an admired public figure to Jews and gentiles alike.

Rabbi Don Yitzchok passed away in 5268/1508 at the age of 71. The generation which mourned his passing referred to the year as the year of *ChaSeR* (lacking or absence). He was buried in Padua, since the burial of Jews in Venice was forbidden at that time. About a year later there was a war in the area and the cemetery was destroyed. The location of his grave is

At a difficult time in our history, he raised up the nation with anticipation for Geula, giving meaning to the suffering and torment which was their lot: out of the sorrow will sprout the Geula!

unknown till today.

Rabbi Don Yitzchok Abarbanel was a man of multiple talents and the most senior Jew in the European government at that time. He frequented the palaces of kings and rulers and acted devotedly on behalf of his brethren. He demonstrated authentic Jewish faith along with a broad intellect and knowledge of philosophy and gentile culture. He was admired by both Jews and non-Jews. Along with his political and

communal work he was one of the great Torah commentators in the history of our people.

He yearned for the Geula and he inspired hope and faith in the hearts of the unfortunate Jews in exile. At a difficult time in our history, he raised up the nation with anticipation for Geula, giving meaning to the suffering and torment which was their lot: out of the sorrow will sprout the Geula!

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A BIRTHDAY WITHIN A BIRTHDAY

By A. Michaeli

“Is the Rebbe really a prophet? Is he a holy man?” * A curious doctor, an amazing dream of the Rebbe, and a birthday party.

Members of the medical establishment in the United States are humbled whenever his name is mentioned; his patients rave about his skill and humanity, and his closest colleagues do not hide their envy and admiration, which grow from day to day.

And if all that isn't enough, he displays outstanding character traits such as generosity and treating indigent patients pro bono, which is something of a rarity at his level of practice.

His personal telephone numbers appear in the phone books of communal workers in the religious community. His heart is open to their needs. We refer to him here as Dr. R and in 5748 he met a Lubavitcher from Crown Heights named Yossi Tevel. Yossi's father needed the medical opinion of a top doctor and that is how he got to know the doctor. They became friendly and as time went on and

they met more often, they became close and the doctor's connection with his Lubavitcher friend grew.

The topic that preoccupied him was the Rebbe and Chassidim. “I was always curious to understand this deeply emotional world,” Doctor R said. Yossi did his best to explain the ideas that are central to a Chassid's life. The doctor was very receptive to what he had to say but he still seemed less than completely convinced.

Some years went by. Every time they met, the doctor wanted to hear what was new in Lubavitch, what the Rebbe had spoken about lately, etc.

One day, in 5752, when Yossi went to the doctor again, he found the doctor in a highly emotional state. “Please stay after I answer your question. I must speak to you!”

After discussing the medical issue Yossi had come to discuss, the doctor said, “Tell me; is the Rebbe really a prophet? Is he a holy man? I

want to hear miracles that he did. I want to hear specific things that prove his greatness.”

“The Rebbe's greatness,” said Yossi, “is not in the miracles that he does. The Rebbe is the Rosh B'nei Yisroel, and he is concerned about every Jew. So although I could tell you big miracles about the Gulf War, the hurricane in Miami, wars in Israel etc. I'd rather tell you a personal miracle story that shows the Rebbe's concern for the ordinary Jew.”

INFORMED OF MY BIRTHDAY

The doctor listened closely to his friend's story.

“Twenty years ago, my father had yechidus with the Rebbe together with his family and he told the Rebbe about his mother's poor health. During the yechidus, the Rebbe suddenly said, ‘Whose birthday is it today?’ Nobody answered. The Rebbe gave us brachos and answered the questions that had been submitted in writing. He told my father what to do in his mother's situation and boruch Hashem, his mother recovered and lived nearly another decade.

“That night, my father couldn't sleep. The Rebbe's question about a birthday gave him no peace. All the difficult experiences he went through during the war went through his mind and he realized that due to the upheavals in his life he was not certain of the date of his birth.

“When he went to his mother to tell her of the Rebbe's brachos he asked her whether she still remembered his birthday. ‘Of course,’ she said. ‘Your birthday is 18 Av.’

“My father was astounded since that day was 18 Av. He rushed to 770 and waited in *Gan Eden HaTachton* for when the Rebbe would come out to daven. The Rebbe smiled at him and blessed him

and reminded him to do the birthday customs.

“That is one example that teaches us about his ruach ha’kodesh and his relationship with every Jew. At two in the morning, after a long and tiring day, he remembered and reminded a Jew that it was his birthday. And that story took place twenty years ago. In recent years, the Rebbe announced a Birthday Campaign and asked to take our Jewish birthday seriously and to use it as an opportunity to progress in our religious observance.

“In light of the new mitvza and wanting to help a Jew celebrate his birthday properly, a computer program was written that enables you to convert your English birthday to the Hebrew date.”

The doctor jumped up when he heard this and he said, “You mean you can tell me when my Jewish birthday is?”

“Sure,” said Yosef. And from the doctor’s office he called Tzivos Hashem and asked for the Hebrew date of September ... 1933. The person who answered the phone asked him to call back on Monday since it was late and he was leaving the office, but Yossi told him this was an important person, a world famous doctor, and he needed an answer.

The person took the time to look it up and moments later had the answer: 13 Elul. Chills went down Yossi’s spine. “Dr. R, today is your birthday! Happy birthday!”

Yossi decided to make a birthday party for the doctor. He apologized to the doctor, saying he had to step out for twenty minutes for a meeting in a nearby office and that he would come right back. The excited doctor asked him not to forget to return since he still wanted to talk to him. Yossi went out and called his brother Pinchas and asked him to quickly buy some things for the party.

Within half an hour the Tevel brothers were back in the doctor’s office. Dr. R looked dumbfounded by the surprise party in the middle of his work day. They showered him with brachos which were warmly received by the doctor who could barely utter a word. “There are no words ...” was all he managed to say.



A few weeks went by and I got no response. I had expected at least a form letter from the secretary but I got nothing and I was very disappointed. Even if the president of the United States was sick, he would respond to his well-wishers through his assistants and here nobody had responded. I was annoyed. A few days went by and then last night the Rebbe appeared to me in a dream...

THE REBBE CALMED HIM IN A DREAM

After a few minutes when things had calmed down a bit, the doctor asked them to sit down and he said, "Now I would like to tell you why I asked you about the Rebbe today.

"Last night, in the middle of the night, the phone in my house rang and a non-Jewish colleague of mine was on the line. He apologized for calling so late and said, 'A few years ago, when I discovered that the Rebbe appears on television (referring to the farbrengens that were broadcast live on cable TV in the US) I found myself becoming more and more fascinated by this holy man.

"I did not understand a word he said and yet, whenever he was on, I watched and didn't budge until he was finished. He had me hypnotized. A few weeks ago I heard about his stroke and I kept thinking about this holy man and what happened to him and I was very worried.

"When I found the phone number of the Rebbe's office, I called and offered my medical services if I could help in any way. This wasn't my field but still, I said I

would be happy to help out.

"The secretary thanked me and took my information and that was that. Besides volunteering to help, as an expression of my admiration for this holy man which only continued to grow, I really wanted to do something for him. I sent the Rebbe a get-well card and said that we all hoped to see the Rebbe well again in public appearances. In addition to my well wishes I wrote ten questions that bothered me on various topics and I asked the Rebbe that when he recovered, if he could please answer my questions I would be very happy.

"A few weeks went by and I got no response. I had expected at least a form letter from the secretary but I got nothing and I was very disappointed. Even if the president of the United States was sick, he would respond to his well-wishers through his assistants and here nobody had responded. I was annoyed. A few days went by and then ...

"Last night the Rebbe appeared to me in a dream. He walked in a large hall with two rabbis accompanying him. Around him were masses of Chassidim who sang

enthusiastically. I stood there among them and suddenly the Rebbe stopped near me and said: Thank you for your well wishes. I received the letter and don't worry. As far as your questions, the answer to the first one is ... and regarding the second question ... And the Rebbe answered all my questions one by one. Then I woke up.

"A cold sweat covered my forehead as I recalled what the Rebbe said and to my surprise, all the answers amazed me in their correctness. I couldn't get over it and so I decided to call you, my friend, at this unconventional hour.' And the non-Jewish doctor concluded his story."

A NEW MAN

Dr. R looked at his Lubavitcher friend. "Do you understand why I asked you today to tell me about the Rebbe? After what my friend told me, I decided to hear some more specifics about the miracles this man does."

The extraordinary meeting ended and the Tevel brothers said goodbye. The month of Elul had come to an end and then so did the Yomim Nora'im. It was Sukkos. Yossi took his children to the rides in Boro Park on Chol HaMoed. As they were enjoying themselves with their father watching them, he suddenly heard his name being called. He looked around and it was none other than Dr. R who was standing and watching, surrounded by a group of twenty Chassidim.

The two men shook hands and the doctor said, "You should know that since the day you were in my office, I constantly think of what happened to me. I bought a tallis and t'fillin and on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur I stayed in shul all day. I have become a new man thanks to the Rebbe!"

EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN WITH LOVE

Some stories and inspirational ideas from Rabbi Yossi Jacobson's lectures on chinuch delivered over the course of a speaking tour in Eretz Yisroel.



AHARON HA'KOHEN'S HUG

Before Rabbi Berel Baumgarten became a shliach in Buenos Aires, he was a teacher in New York. Every Shabbos afternoon the students in his class joined him for learning. They were around 15 years old.

R' Baumgarten wrote to the Rebbe that one boy came to the shiur each Shabbos smelling from cigarette smoke. He did not see him smoking but it seemed that the boy had smoked shortly before coming to the shiur. He told the Rebbe that he was very nervous because this boy was charismatic and influential and he could have a bad influence on other boys. Although he was almost sure the boy was being mechalel Shabbos, he did not know 100%. His question was whether he should tell the boy not to come so he would not have a negative influence on the others.

The Rebbe's written response consisted of three words which translate into English as: "look in Avos D'Rabbi Nosson, chapter 12."

This letter was recently printed and when I saw it, I looked it up and read about the following: It says that Aharon HaKohen would greet everyone, from the greatest tzaddikim to the utterly wicked. When he met them, he gave them a warm hello. When a rasha would meet Aharon and would be warmly received by him, it would seem to him that Aharon thought highly of him. The next day, when he wanted to do some sin, he would say to himself: No! I will meet Aharon today and he will give me a hug. If he knew who I really am, he wouldn't hug me, etc.

That was the Rebbe's answer.

**"AND YOU SHALL TEACH
YOUR SONS" – THESE
ARE YOUR STUDENTS**

Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman

Hashem asked Avrohom: How is it possible that you can talk to the entire world and say, “You are a child of G-d,” but when it comes to your nephew you say, “We can’t live together?”

(H’y’d) would quote the Chazal that Rashi brings on the words, “and you shall teach your sons,” “these are your students for students are called sons” and he would ask: Why doesn’t it simply say, “and you shall teach your students?”

R’ Wasserman explained that if it said that, then the message that your talmidim should be like your very own children would be lost! So it says “sons” and it is explained to mean “students.” This teaches us that if you want to be successful in educating your students, you need to regard them as your children.

MEKURAVIM AND CHILDREN AND HOW WE TREAT THEM

On the verse in Parshas Lech Lecha, “and Hashem spoke to Avrohom after Lot parted from him,” the Midrash Raba says that the word for “spoke” (dibeir) is a harsh one because Hashem was reproving Avrohom for not being mekarev his nephew when he was able to be mekarev so many others.

I heard firsthand from a bachur who had been on shlichus in India how someone came into the Chabad house looking not particularly clean, full of tattoos and rings, and the shliach gave him a hearty “shalom aleichem” and welcome with a hug. He served him a meal and gave him an aliya on Yom Kippur. He sat him at the head of the table etc.

Within a few days, this tourist was going to the mikva, learning Tanya, putting on t’fillin, and a few months later he had completely

changed.

The reason is simple:

We merited endless sichos, maamarim, letters, and insights from the Rebbe who guided an entire generation in how to reveal the spark that lies hidden in every Jew; how to open a window to the rich spiritual world of a Jew. Therefore, when looking at a Jew with tattoos and earrings in a loving manner, it changes him for the positive.

What happens when it’s a child born into a religious home who grew up with kashrus, Shabbos, and yiras Shamayim? When this child says something improper, the father, teacher, counselor, mashpia, or principal says, “There’s no hope for you,” “Go find another place.”

What happened to all the sichos? Why is there such a gap between what the Chabad movement is doing for those on the outside to what is happening on the inside? Why is this justified?

Similarly, Hashem asked Avrohom: How is it possible that you can talk to the entire world and say, “You are a child of G-d,” but when it comes to your nephew you say, “We can’t live together?”

ON THE SAME PLANE

I was at a conference on the topic of Jewish continuity and I was asked: How is it possible that a Chabad shliach goes somewhere where he is not liked, where the president of the community tells him he is not wanted and that he will pay for his ticket to leave, and the shliach smiles and says: Let’s

pretend that I haven’t arrived yet. And six months later they are good friends and he is the shliach’s biggest supporter. In contrast, you have a Jewish outreach activist who is clean shaven, clean and organized, well attired, with degrees in chemistry and physics, who speaks English articulately, and he is not successful.

The person asking me the question said: I know your shlichim and most of them did not get an education, their English is poor, they don’t know how to write English, they don’t finish a sentence without errors, they have beards, and yet they are successful!

I answered him: The answer is simple. I will ask you a question. If a relative of yours needed an operation, you wouldn’t open a phone book and look for a surgeon. You would call a doctor friend and tell him you want a top doctor and you would ask other friends and people who went through something similar, and after you found out who the best doctor is, you would make an appointment with him.

But if you wanted to fly somewhere, which is no less dangerous than an operation, you don’t make inquiries about the pilot and you don’t interview those who flew with him on other occasions. What’s the difference?

The surgeon takes a knife and cuts but he and the knife are separate entities. If the operation is unsuccessful, he won’t suffer from the results. A pilot, on the other hand, is on the same flight and if he did not rely on himself, he wouldn’t fly the plane because he wants to remain alive! So when it comes to a doctor, I don’t trust just anyone and when it comes to a pilot who is sitting on the plane with me, I rely on him!

So too, there are two types of people involved in reaching out to their fellow Jews. There is a rabbi who is like a doctor who comes with

My third grade teacher said: I have one rule. If you are a teacher, you must love the students. If you are under stress, take care of it somewhere else. If you don't love the students, leave. When I teach, I want them to love me the way I love them.

his knife to heal others. The Rebbe does not send surgeons; he sends pilots. Shluchim fly with them, live and breathe with them, and identify with them 100%.

We need to adopt this idea in every home, school and yeshiva. Parents and teachers cannot be surgeons, even if they studied medicine at the best medical school. They must be pilots so that the children will trust them implicitly since children tend to feel the same trust in adults as the adults feel towards them, and they will feel they are on the same flight as the adult.

LOVE HIM TWICE AS MUCH

In California I met the principal of a successful school and I asked him what the key to his success is. He told me:

Before I became a principal, I was a teacher for 25 years. Before I began teaching, when I got married, I wanted to invite to my wedding someone who had taught me in the past. For some reason, I only remembered the teacher who taught me in third grade and I only invited him. When I called him, I asked him why I had forgotten all my other teachers and had only remembered him.

My third grade teacher said: I have one rule. If you are a teacher, you must love the students. If you are under stress, take care of it

somewhere else. If you don't love the students, leave. When I teach, I want them to love me the way I love them.

Then the teacher made another point – If you have a student who is hard to love, because the minute he sits down in your class he makes trouble, what should you do? Love him twice as much!

The former student asked: Why love him double and not as much as the others?

The teacher said: Because the teacher he had last year definitely didn't love him and you have to make up for it.

The principal concluded: I understood why I loved this teacher and 25 years later I still live with this approach.

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MESSAGES TO THE MIKVA DEPARTMENT

By Nosson Avrohom

Mrs. Anat Ariel is emotional as she relates the story of how the Chabad mikva in Maaleh Adumim came to be built. About a decade ago, she received a series of answers through the Igros Kodesh with the common denominator being the topic of mikvaos. This led her, as a municipal employee in the department of mikvaos, to discuss it with the rav of the city, who was amazed by her timing. As a result, a Chabad mikva, *bor al gabbei bor*, was built.

Today, the Chabad mikva is the most popular in the city. It took the religious council time to understand that the success of this specific mikva was solely due to the fact that this mikva, which was built according to the parameters and stringencies of Chabad, was built with the heavenly assistance of the Rebbe.

"Since then we have seen amazing miracles as a result of brachos the Rebbe gave through the Igros Kodesh. Children were born,

people were saved and others were healed. Everybody at the religious council knows that when they have a problem, the Rebbe is the one to turn to for a bracha."

THE REBBE BROUGHT IT UP AGAIN AND AGAIN

"After working as a preschool teacher for Chabad for years, I changed jobs and began working for the religious city council in the mikva department. I also teach kallos, a shlichus through which a lot can be accomplished.

"One day, I received a call from a colleague, a woman who is not a Lubavitcher, who asked me to write to the Rebbe for a problem she had. You have to understand that writing to the Rebbe at work is commonplace. Many of the employees and their relatives have seen amazing answers and experienced miracles.

"That same day we got together and wrote to the Rebbe. We put the

letter into a volume of Igros Kodesh. We were surprised to see that the answer had to do with mikvaos. The Rebbe asked that some problems with the mikva used by the person who wrote him the letter, be corrected.

"We looked at one another in dismay. Although her question did not have to do with mikva, the fact that both she and I worked in the mikva department alarmed us. Apparently the Rebbe knew something we didn't know and there was a problem that needed to be fixed.

"I went directly to the rav of the city, who is known for his admiration of the Rebbe, and asked him to do something about this. He took the matter very seriously. Within a short time he had brought experts to check the three mikvaos that operated in the city. They meticulously examined the water storage compartments, the openings and the roof and fixed whatever needed repair.

"We felt very good about the fact that the things that needed fixing were fixed even though they weren't significant. I decided to write this good news to the Rebbe. A few days later I wrote down what corrections were made as a result of the Rebbe's instruction. I was taken aback when the letter that I opened to also dealt with mikva.

"The unusual thing was that in the weeks to come, every time I wrote to the Rebbe, whether for personal reasons or for other women who asked me to write for them, the Rebbe's answer had to do with mikva. When I wrote to the Rebbe for the fifth time and the answer was about mikva, I couldn't avoid it anymore. It was obvious that the Rebbe wanted me to do something, but what? Could I go back to the rav of the city and ask him to check the mikvaos again? I was at a loss for ideas.

"I read and reread the last letter I

had opened to. It was a letter that had originally been sent to Rabbi Dovid Chanzin and is printed in volume 5, p. 307:

I just received your letter in which you write in detail the order of events regarding the building of mikvaos in new places, that you are still in the middle of negotiations but there is a chance that you will succeed and in order to speed things up you offered, if it becomes necessary, to participate in granting a loan in order to cover the extra expense for building a mikva in accordance with the directive of our holy N'siim.

I was pleased to read that things are developing along these lines, and may it be Hashem's will that the matter end as per the will of our holy N'siim. If a loan is needed, I will also participate in this from the funds under my responsibility in the amount of fifty liras which can be repaid in half a year. Although, in general, I hope that the dearth of funds will not be an impediment to the thing itself.

"We consulted a lot with Rabbi Efraim Kaminker of Afula and he told us point blank to accept the contents of the letter at face value. It seemed that the Rebbe wanted us to approach the appropriate people and to ask for a Chabad mikva, built according to the shita of the Rebbe Rashab.

SPEAKING TO THE RAV OF THE CITY AND A SURPRISE

"When I thought about making such a request of the rav or the members of the religious council my stomach got tied up in knots. How could I ask them for that? There were three active mikvaos already and there was no need or demand for a new one. In addition, building a mikva goes along with endless bureaucratic red tape and if there



We looked at one another in dismay. Although her question did not have to do with mikva, the fact that both she and I worked in the mikva department alarmed us. Apparently the Rebbe knew something we didn't...

was another mikva in the works, I would certainly have known about it.

"I felt very uncomfortable approaching the rabbi and talking to him about this. Although he greatly admired the Rebbe, I didn't think he would be receptive to opening a new mikva, one that was built according to Chabad specifications.

"It was my husband who encouraged me and reminded me that we are soldiers of the Rebbe and we cannot mix in our emotions and ego. The Rebbe asks for something and we have to carry it out like disciplined soldiers.

"Encouraged but a little hesitant, I walked up the steps leading to the rabbi's house with the Rebbe's letter in my bag. I had barely begun to bring up the topic when a look of surprise crossed his face. There were

many reactions that I would have expected from him, but I couldn't understand why he would be amazed by my suggestion.

"When he recovered somewhat, he told me that three days earlier there had been a confidential meeting in his house which was attended by the mayor, the city's engineer and other important people. The topic under discussion was the construction of a new mikva in another neighborhood of the city.

"It seems", said the rabbi, 'that the Rebbe knows everything, and he wants the mikva to be Chabad.'

"Now it was my turn to be astounded. The rabbi realized this was something extraordinary and he took the Rebbe's answer very seriously. Let it be said to his credit and the credit of the people in the

municipality that even though the plans for the new mikva were finished, including the budget, they were willing to make changes to the plans and add immensely to the cost of the project! Rabbi Avrohom Michael Halperin, rav of French Hill, supervised the construction and made sure everything was done according to Chabad custom and specifications.

"It was an important lesson in faith in the Rebbe's words, for me and those involved in this story. We don't always immediately understand what the Rebbe means, but if we carry out his requests as he wants, we will give him much nachas.

"The mikva definitely brought brachos to the many families who live in Maaleh Adumim. People feel that this mikva is special. It is very popular while other mikvaos are emptier. At first the members of the religious municipality thought it was because of the quality of the service or the cleanliness and they tried to improve things in the other locations, but they soon realized that there was something about the mikva itself that is special and they are right. It is the fact that it's the Rebbe's mikva.



‘A NORMAL AND EASY BIRTH’

By Nosson Avrohom
Translated By Michael Leib Dobry

According to dry statistics, more than thirteen thousand expectant mothers are brought each year to give birth at the Soroka Medical Center in Beersheva. It has by far one of the largest and most crowded maternity wards among hospitals, not just in Eretz Yisroel, but in the Western world. Many students learning for their degree in medicine at the nearby University of the Negev do their internships at the medical center. Delegations of doctors come from all over the world to learn from the vast professional experience and expertise accumulated there over the years.

These doctors have encountered some of the most complex and difficult maternity cases imaginable. They render their diagnoses with confidence, and generally speaking, whatever comes up thereafter is fully anticipated.

But that was before a young Chabad couple showed up recently, and stymied them with a series of brachos that they were privileged to receive from the Rebbe via “Igros Kodesh.” The doctors responded with ridicule, those around them refused to believe, but the end

results surprised them all...

“We should know that every healthy fetus is an amazing and revealed illustration of G-dly kindness,” the chassid (who chooses to remain anonymous) begins his story. “Nothing is a given. The process is a complicated one, yet one paved with open Divine Providence.

“One of the dangers is premature birth, when the child is not sufficiently developed to make its entrance safely into the world. There are weeks when the danger to early birth is extremely great, to the point that the baby’s life is in grave danger.

“Such was the frightening situation that occurred with my wife. She was in the relatively early stages of pregnancy when she started feeling her first labor pains. As inexperienced young people, we simply assumed that it wasn’t anything unusual, and surely not the initial signs of labor. However, instead of passing, the pains seemed to intensify. We hurried to the nearest hospital – “Assaf HaRofo”, at Tzrifin Junction, near Kfar Chabad. The doctors conducted a series of tests and determined that in fact this

was a case of early labor.

“They tried to assure us that such things do happen and it’s not a rare occurrence. Nevertheless, they decided to hospitalize her as a precautionary measure.

“As the doctors continued with their procedural examinations, I saw that the sun was already setting, and I dashed over the hospital synagogue to daven Mincha. As I finished davening, I noticed that the synagogue’s bookshelves were filled with s’farim on chassidus – proof of the many Chabad chassidim who visit the premises. Among them was also a volume of ‘Igros Kodesh’. I decided that this was a perfect opportunity to request a bracha from the Rebbe that the birth should take place at the normal time.

“I wrote down everything I felt in my heart, all the fears, all my requests – and I put them into that PaN. When I opened the seifer, I was speechless. The sheer clarity of the answer shocked me to the core:

On the notification regarding his wife, *tichye*, it would be proper to check the mezuzos in his apartment, and similarly, his wife, *tichye*, should give a few coins to a charity of Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes each Erev Shabbos Kodesh, and he should become stronger at least until after the birth, in a good and auspicious hour, in observing the three shiurim established by my revered and holy father-in-law, the Rebbe, for all Jews alike, i.e., Chumash, T’hillim, and Tanya, and G-d Alm-ghty will complete the days of the pregnancy of his wife, *tichye*, normally and easily, and she will give birth to a healthy child in its proper time, normally and easily (Vol. 7, pg. 152).

“I returned to my wife’s room and told her about the clear answer, and we were strengthened by the mere knowledge that there was someone watching over and caring for us. We have a leader who is concerned for all his chassidim, and

Over the next two days, they attempted a variety of medical techniques to curb the premature labor, but to no avail. Finally, the doctors gave up. They said that the matter is out of their hands, and that we should prepare ourselves for an imminent birth.

after such an unambiguous response we felt as if a huge weight had been lifted off our shoulders.

"After a few days, we decided to travel for a brief rest at the home of my in-laws, who serve as the Rebbe's shluchim in southern Eretz Yisroel. All our hopes that the recent health problem was now behind us were quickly dashed. My wife began to feel the early labor pains again, and this time they were much stronger than before. Once again, we immediately drove to the nearest hospital – the Soroka Medical Center in Beersheva. The doctors took control of the situation and tried to stabilize her condition. Over the next two days, they attempted a variety of medical techniques, but to no avail. Finally, the doctors gave up. They said that the matter is out of their hands, and that we should prepare ourselves for an imminent birth.

"I met with the director of the hospital maternity ward, a well-known and reputable professor with considerable experience in the field, and he told me directly: 'We have tried all that we could to handle the situation, but nothing has seemed to help, and it can no longer be controlled.' The tense medical staff knew that it was only a matter of hours. In the meantime, they invited us to see the ward for premature infants to and get an impression about how it operates.

"The director of this wing,

another highly experienced physician, explained to us clearly and simply about the consequences of such a premature birth. He even described in great detail the effect that the pills she had been taking would have upon the unborn child. He didn't hide any information from us, and we were gripped by a feeling of panic. While I constantly reminded my wife and myself of the clear answer we had received from the Rebbe, everything we were seeing and hearing was leading us to quite the opposite conclusion. The truth is that I failed to calm myself in the face of what some of the most experienced doctors in Israel were telling us.

"Yet, minutes turned into hours, hours into days, and while the pains continued, they were not enough to lead to childbirth. The doctors couldn't understand how this was possible, but made every effort to keep things as they were. Every doctor who entered the room gave a totally different diagnosis than his colleagues. These were an extremely confusing two days. The emotional pressure was simply unbearable. Another woman in the ward added fuel to the fire when she told us about a similar case in which the child was born severely deformed...

"Events continued with such intensity that we were at a loss how to react or what to believe. In the midst of all this, the Rebbe's clear answer stood before me, and I

prayed for G-d's Divine guidance in a manner transcending all logic and reason, and that all their frightening talk would turn out to be absolute nonsense.

"After going two full days without any sleep, I called my mother in law and asked her to come and stay with my wife, while I went over to the house of one of my relatives in Beersheva to get some rest. She was naturally interested to know what was happening, and I told her about the Rebbe's answer.

"It was late at night, and we didn't want the children to wake up. I quietly told the entire chain of events, and she asked to see the answer. I went over to the bookcase, but instead of bringing Volume 7, I brought her Volume 6 by mistake. I looked by candlelight for the answer that I had received at Assaf HaRofe Hospital, which I had kept with me and had already shown to numerous people, and I couldn't understand why I was suddenly unable to find it. A moment before returning the seifer to the bookshelf, the Rebbe's words of calm and comfort seemed to leap off the page in front of my exhausted eyes. I was stunned. The Rebbe had once again found the opportunity to soothe my raw emotions:

I was pleased to receive word that his daughter, Mrs....., has entered her fifth month of pregnancy. May it be the will of G-d Alm-ghty that He will complete the days of her pregnancy, normally and easily, and she will surely follow the instruction of the doctor who customarily visits her from time to time, and the birth will be in its proper time, normally and easily, and he will derive from her and his other children much nachas, Yiddishe nachas and chassidishe nachas (Vol. 6, pg. 161).

"I read the answer again and again, and saw that the Rebbe had written to me for a second time that

my wife was in the fifth month of her pregnancy, and G-d Alm-ghty would complete the days of her pregnancy, normally and easily. What could be clearer than that?

"This gave me a tremendous infusion of encouragement. I compelled myself to focus only on the unqualified answers of the Rebbe, and to disregard the pessimistic opinions of the doctors. This was no easy task, but in the face of such amazingly clear replies, I simply could not remain indifferent or lacking in faith. The next day, fortified by a few hours of sleep, I returned to the hospital and was shocked to hear the doctors' update. They admitted that they didn't have any explanation for the situation, as they had never encountered one like it before, but despite the intense labor pains, the birth didn't appear to be coming any time soon.

"Nevertheless, the situation was totally unclear to us. We met privately with the director of the hospital maternity ward, and he couldn't help but express the level of his concern and apprehension. In an authoritative voice, he explained to us that eighty percent of infants born at such a stage in the pregnancy usually don't survive, and the twenty percent that do survive are born with serious developmental problems. He still remained steadfast in his opinion that 'with such labor pains, the birth will take place soon.'

"Thus, we continued to hover between faith and reality, between prophecy and pessimistic estimates. I sat down and wrote another letter to the Rebbe, requesting his bracha that everything should go normally,

Minutes turned into hours, hours into days, and while the pains continued, they were not enough to lead to childbirth. The doctors couldn't understand how this was possible, but made every effort to keep things as they were. Every doctor who entered the room gave a totally different diagnosis than his colleagues.

in direct contrast to what the doctors and other experts were telling us to expect.

"The third answer appeared in Volume 18, pg. 358. The Rebbe wrote a letter entirely in Yiddish, except for two lines in Hebrew at the very end: **And I will double my blessing that G-d Alm-ghty will complete his wife's pregnancy, normally and easily, and she will give birth to a healthy child in its proper time, normally and easily.**

"This encouraging letter made it a "chazaka" already, but it still thrilled us anew.

"In spite of continual problems, my wife was eventually released, pending developments. While we were still at Soroka, I promised the Rebbe that after the birth would take place, normally and easily, I will publicize this story publicly.

"In the end, my wife did give birth to a healthy baby girl, 'normally and easily', exactly on time as Heaven had determined. The doctors at Soroka were puzzled,

each trying to profess some sort of medical explanation for this miracle."

*

"As I tell you this story now, everything that we experienced back then comes back to me, and I start to break out into a cold sweat," the chassid said, as he concluded his story. "My relative from Beersheva, who had hosted me during my wife's hospitalization in Soroka, told me that she had given birth several times, yet she never had the privilege of receiving such clear and unqualified answers from the Rebbe for any of them – while we received three crystal clear responses, one after the other..."

"Fortunate are we to be chassidim, marching in the glorious path of the Rebbe. From out of the doubled and redoubled darkness of exile, the answers from 'Igros Kodesh' come as a much welcome beam of sunlight."

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REACHING OUT IN “RED” CHAIFA

By Nosson Avrohom
Photographs by Levi Navon

*Charming, straightforward, and just plain nice, is how I would sum up the shliach, Rabbi Natan Lernoboy. Though he has been on shlichus to Neve Dovid in Chaifa for nearly 20 years, when I said I wanted to interview him, he was surprised and wondered why I picked him. * R' Natan's personal story, his outreach work, and stories about how some of his mekuravim became baalei t'shuva.*

In the Kiryat Dovid neighborhood there is hardly anybody who doesn't know him. Somehow or other, they have all been exposed to his work. Families with financial difficulties meet him when they come at the end of the week to pick up a food basket for Shabbos... or before Yomim Tovim, when the number of food baskets doubles and triples.

Middle class families make his

acquaintance when they come to have mezuzos checked, to write to the Rebbe, to the shiur that he gives regularly, or when he has visited them on house calls. He also knows the children who have participated in his seasonal programs or his bar mitzva prep classes.

R' Lernoboy is a very easygoing kind of person, the kind whose patience does not wear thin when

a nudnik knocks at his door. In a neighborhood like Kiryat Dovid, a high level of tolerance is essential. The neighborhood has a high percentage of poor families, including many immigrants, and they contend with an unfortunate economic reality. They all find the shliach to be a good listener and he helps them out whenever he's able.

One of the things that bother him is the fact that he has not kept his mekuravim with him and he doesn't have a solid Lubavitcher community. He is always starting over.

"It has been a long time now that I feel that we succeeded in phase one and now we have to open mosdos. Maybe that will keep the mekuravim here and even attract other people to join us."

A LONG ROAD

Few of R' Lernoboy's mekuravim know his life's story, how he came to adopt the path of Judaism and Chabad Chassidus. R' Natan was born in a home with no Jewish traditions or faith. His parents made aliya from Argentina and settled on a kibbutz in the north of the country. The kibbutz's ideology suited them. Eventually, they became disgusted with the totalitarianism of kibbutz life, and they moved back to Argentina. When they later decided to once again make aliya, they settled in Natzrat Ilit.

"My parents decided to leave the kibbutz a few years after arriving there. I was only four. Aside from the fact that they were Jews, my parents saw no need to observe any elements of our tradition. I was raised with the ideals of being a good person, a man of integrity, just and successful, and nothing beyond that.

"Most of my childhood was



spent in the Cordoba area of Argentina, and we returned to Israel when I was just before draft age. After my army service I rented an apartment in Chaifa and began working for the municipality.

"From a young age I felt that something was missing. I had a strong sense of emptiness and I looked for ways to fill it. At first I didn't connect it with my identity, having no reason to think along those lines. The education I received said that everything was chance and tradition is a lie. The light began to go off in my mind only after I finished my army duty.

"Menachem Begin, the leader of the opposition, was my hero. There was a stormy campaign and I threw myself into it. I was his ardent supporter and I devotedly worked on convincing people to support his candidacy. I distributed flyers and hung up signs. When Begin was elected and the news broadcasters announced the upset, I couldn't have been happier. I looked up to Begin as an impressive leader and I had blind faith in him. This feeling of admiration quieted the inner emptiness I had.

"When Begin decided to go to

the Camp David Accords, I was devastated. I walked around for days feeling confused and hurt. More than not standing behind what he had said, the myth had been shattered for me. I went back to my search for who I was and what I was about.

"I was consumed with questions. Who am I and what is the inner significance of my belonging to the Jewish people? Why and how are we different than all the nations? I bought a Tanach and began reading it in my spare time. The various stories in the Tanach struck me. I learned on my own and I analyzed our current situation in light of those stories. I began to realize that there is One who runs the world and that we would always be persecuted by the goyim.

"I decided to buy a kippa and to wear it. My friends at work had different reactions; some thought I was crazy. To all of them I said that I chose to wear a kippa after spending months reading the Tanach and having come to the conclusion that our nation is not like other nations. It is only if we preserve our uniqueness that we will be able to prevail over those who seek to harm us.

"My parents found this step traumatic. They were extremely upset.

"Not long afterwards, in 1984, I was walking down Hertzl Street in Chaifa and I saw two young bearded men with kippot and tzitzis. They were Avi Weiner and Chanoch Shachar. They were holding black boxes and leather straps. Until I met them, I had never put on t'fillin. I had heard about t'fillin but had no idea what they were or their significance.

"They asked me if I wanted to put on t'fillin and since I had started connecting with my roots, I agreed. I asked questions about the t'fillin and they answered me. I felt such a special feeling that I will never forget it. I felt like a small child. I can't explain it. I cried and I felt an inner feeling of exaltedness. I asked them where they were based so I could come back and meet them and they gave me an address.

"Months went by and my preoccupation with work made me forget that chance meeting with the bachurim. I didn't forget my search, though. I was at the stage of reading the Five Books of the Torah.

"Finally, I decided to check out the address they had given me to see what was there. Outside there were no signs to indicate what was within. In the entrance I met two children, whom I later learned were R' Reuven Dunin's children. They were giving out Chanuka gelt from the Lubavitcher Rebbe to passersby. They directed me inside, where I met R' Reuven.

"I was impressed by his appearance. I went over to him and said, "Honored rabbi, I am a *chozer b't'shuva*." That didn't seem to make an impression on him. He smiled and invited me to visit often and to take part in shiurim and t'fillos. I was really surprised when he told me where

YARON BAGHDADI'S MIRACLE

Many people in Kiryat Dovid have experienced miracles with the Rebbe. Many of them are mekusharim to the Rebbe and they make good resolutions and see amazing things happen.

Yaron Baghdadi is the brother of Lior who had the miracle with his son (see article). Yaron is a manager in a store. Two years ago, there was a big shortage of umbrellas and he decided to travel abroad and invest his money in a huge quantity of umbrellas. He did the research and found that he could double and triple his money.

He invested 200,000 shekels, not a small sum by any means. He was excited as he took a truck to the port to pick up the thousands of umbrellas. His plan was to go around the next day to many stores and to sell his stock.

The next morning, when he went down to the parking lot, he was shocked to see that the door of the truck was open and that thieves had cleaned out his entire stock. He burst into tears, thinking of the fortune he had invested, money that he had saved over a long time. He knew that the police did not have the ability to retrieve the stolen goods for they would not exert themselves to find it.

Yaron believed in the Rebbe and apparently, this was the z'chus for the Rebbe to help him. Otherwise, there is no way to explain what happened next.

In the front of the truck is a picture of the Rebbe. He sat in the driver's seat and tearfully asked the Rebbe to help him.

Brokenhearted, and with eyes red from crying, he went into his store. A few hours went by and a dealer whom he knew walked into the store. He told Yaron that the day before he had gotten a large quantity of umbrellas and he offered to sell them. Yaron asked to see them and immediately identified them as his. He asked him who imported them and he was directed to an office in Krayot.

With pockets full of papers and money so that the importer would think he had come to do business, Yaron told him that he wanted to buy all his umbrellas. The man was thrilled and told him that he had many umbrellas but in a warehouse in Acco there were even more. They traveled together to the warehouse in Acco, where Yaron identified his stolen umbrellas.

He then confronted the seller: "Listen here. If you don't bring all these umbrellas to me I will call the police, because all of them, including those in your office, belong to me."

The importer realized that he was caught with stolen goods. Scared, he immediately returned all the merchandise to the rightful owner.

he lived because we were practically neighbors.

"From then on, I began to attend farbrengens and shiurim at the Chabad house or his home. I was enthralled and excited by the

content and by the atmosphere of honesty. I felt that I had found that which I loved. Each shiur was enlightening and was so refreshing to hear. I thirsted to learn more and more and R' Dunin provided

it for me. I got a satisfying answer to every question I asked. It is hard for me to describe the wealth that I absorbed, the feeling of truthfulness that I had from the moment I met R' Reuven.

"At that time, farbrengens went well into the night on Thursday nights. Wednesday nights there was an in-depth shiur in Tanya. I have many experiences stored away in my memory from those farbrengens and shiurim and they are with me till today. Those events changed me completely. They refined me and paved the way for me to change both my outer and inner clothing and become a Chassid.

"After a year and a half I went to the Rebbe for the first time. I was already wearing a hat and suit and yearned to see the Rebbe, whom I had only seen in pictures up until then. I arrived in time for the Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen in 5746/1985. When I saw the Rebbe I nearly stopped breathing. I felt I was seeing G-dliness. I said the SheHechyanu blessing and couldn't leave for nine months, during which I delved into the world of Chassidus. At every farbrengen, R' Dunin had spoken about our being worth, maybe, the soles on the Rebbe's shoes. When I got to 770 and saw the Rebbe, I understood more clearly what he was talking about.

"When I returned to Chaifa, my friends could hardly recognize me. My parents began to reconcile themselves to the fact that their son was involved with Lubavitch and that it wasn't a passing fad.

"I began helping R' Dunin do outreach work at the Chabad center in Chaifa located at 70 Hertzl Street.

"I got engaged and I made my second trip to the Rebbe as a chassan. This trip lifted me up another notch above the mud in which I was raised. I felt that the

Rebbe was endowing me with fresh kochos. I won a raffle for a T'hilim the Rebbe had used and I was thrilled.

"Before the trip back to Eretz Yisroel for my wedding, R' Groner, the Rebbe's secretary, brought me into *Gan Eden HaTachton* to get the Siddur. The Rebbe came out of his room and handed me the Siddur of the Rebbe Rayatz so I could daven Mincha and the Rebbe said I should also say, *al cheit sh'chatanu*.

"Until 5753 I continued to help R' Dunin in his work in Chaifa. I went out a lot, particularly to the Neve Dovid neighborhood where I work today, and I started Sheloh and Tzivos Hashem. After a while I felt that I wanted to work there as a regular shliach. My wife and I wrote to the Rebbe that we wanted to go on shlichus and we were told, "haskama u'v'racha." We moved to Neve Dovid and we are trying to prepare this neighborhood to welcome Moshiach."

EVERYBODY IS A POTENTIAL MEKUSHAR

After receiving the Rebbe's bracha, R' Lernoboy opened a branch in the business district of the neighborhood. It has all the essentials of a Chabad house: mezuzos and t'fillin, Siddurim and other sifrei kodesh, and people are welcome to show up in order to ask questions about anything. The branch also serves as the base for all the Chabad house activities throughout the year.

Many people in the neighborhood who have a problem in their lives know that this is the place they can turn to for a bracha and advice. Dozens of people have seen yeshuos.

R' Lernoboy has dozens of miracle stories that he experienced



Lag B'Omer parade in the streets of "red" Chaifa

with people who came to the Chabad house and asked the Rebbe for a bracha and guidance. When I asked him to pick a special story he had a hard time choosing. Then he remembered a story that took place two years ago that made a big impact:

"There is someone in the neighborhood by the name of Lior Baghdadi. He is a mekurav and we have known each other for a few years. Two years ago he came to the Chabad house looking quite upset. I saw that he had come to pour out his heart and I sat down to listen to him. He spent a long time telling me about his wife who was in the advanced stages of pregnancy. The doctors did a test and told her there was something wrong with the baby, apparently Down Syndrome, and they were urging her to abort.

He burst into tears and said, "I don't wear a kippa and don't consider myself religious but I have a problem with an abortion. I think it goes against the Torah and the Creator," and he asked me what I recommended that he do. I suggested that he write to the Rebbe and ask for his advice and a bracha. I explained to him what he had to do and he wrote it all in a

manner that bespoke respect for what he was doing.

The answer that he opened to in the Igros Kodesh amazed me. The Rebbe wrote a letter to a woman who was pregnant and blessed her to complete the pregnancy easily and properly. After such a clear answer I didn't have much explaining to do about what he should tell the doctors and how to calm his wife.

It still wasn't smooth sailing in the next few months, especially after the doctor visits and the continued warnings. I kept encouraging him and giving him hope. Then I didn't see him for a few months.

One day, he walked into the Chabad house all smiles. "Let's say l'chaim," he said. "My wife gave birth to a healthy baby."

R' Lernoboy says he has no idea how many people in the neighborhood have a connection to the Rebbe. He has another story to share:

A few months ago, an older person came into the Chabad house by the name of Mishmor Rubin. I would see him occasionally but we had never really had a conversation. He asked me to come and check his



The shul in the Chabad house

mezuzos. I was happy to do so and that same day I went to his house and found that some mezuzos were pasul. In the conversation that ensued between me and the family, his wife said to him, "Tell the rabbi what you had with the Rebbe ..."

I was surprised by this since I would not have thought that he had any previous connection with Lubavitch. I was curious to hear what he had to say. He told me that he had not had any connection to Chabad or the Rebbe in the past, but on 3 Tammuz, 5754, he dreamt that the Rebbe came to him and smiled a smile he will never forget.

"I was surprised and mainly taken aback," Mishmor described. "I saw some of my friends standing around and I called them over to see the Lubavitcher Rebbe, but when they came, they didn't see anything."

He woke up in a cold sweat. The next day, when he left the house for work, he saw that the headlines were all about the Rebbe.

"Since then," he said to my great surprise, "I live with the Rebbe. I have done many good deeds that I dedicate to the

Rebbe."

A SPECIAL SHUL

When R' Lernoboy started out in Neve Dovid, he wanted to open a nusach Chabad shul. He didn't imagine how fast his dream would come true.

"A short while after I came to the neighborhood, I bought a property upon which I built my home. Near my house was an old, neglected bomb shelter. After getting permission from the neighbors, I changed the tiles, fixed the air conditioner, and cleaned up the place, making in into a beautiful shul.

"Since then we have t'fillos every Shabbos and Yom Tov. Our custom is that before Shacharis we all walk to nearby Nachal Siach to immerse in a spring there, so everybody gets to purify themselves before they daven. This shul has become a community center and much more."

Encounters with the shul and the participants in the shiurim that take place there every Shabbos have attracted young and old to Judaism. R' Lernoboy has many examples, but I chose this special one:

"I was born in Donetsk, Ukraine," Shimon Grishin, whose involvement in Judaism is directly attributed to the shul, told me in a phone interview. "I had no knowledge about Judaism. The only thing I was raised with was stories from Tanach that my grandmother told me. She wasn't religious but something from her ancestors stuck with her, and she tried to convey to me the little bit that she knew. In my youth I was already seeking to 'find myself,' and did not feel at peace.

"When I got older, I connected this to the fact that I am a Jew. Questions like, 'why am I a Jew,' and 'how am I different than anybody else,' kept bothering me. I knew that my mother was Jewish and that I belonged to the Jewish people and that those who belong to the Jewish people live in Israel, so I made aliya. However, my search did not end when I arrived in Israel. To a certain extent, it intensified.

"I looked for answers in various cults and even in Christianity. Everything was fine for a while but it didn't have enough to satisfy me. Another factor that made it difficult for me to find the truth was that I was married to a gentile woman.

"One day I went to R' Natan Lernoboy, who welcomed me warmly. I asked him for a book and he gave me a Tanya. Apparently it wasn't time for me to discover the light because when I got home and opened the book, I did not understand a word and I stuck it away in a drawer.

"An entire year passed. I felt at the end of my rope. It is very hard to explain. I went around with a heavy feeling of missing something but not knowing what.

"It was Shavuot morning when my job brought me near the shul. I asked R' Lernoboy if I could come in and he smiled and said, 'sure.'

Everybody there was wearing kippot and tallitot. They took out the Torah scroll and the atmosphere was one of holiness and seriousness.

“Without understanding much, I felt I had found my place. After years of suffering and inner torment, I felt that this was what I had been looking for. I did not know what a Torah is but it seems that my neshama sensed it and I found myself drawn to it.

“I began visiting the shul regularly. I attended the classes R’ Lernoboy gave in Likkutei Torah. I asked questions and got clear answers the very first time. I soon came to realize that I could no longer continue living with a gentile. That was a tough decision and it wasn’t an easy period but I was determined.

“Following our separation I left my job and spent some time in Beit Shemesh to recover, but I soon returned to Chaifa thanks to a series of events that I felt were signs that I had to return. Each day I wake up and thank the Rebbe for sending his shliach to show me the way of truth.”

THREE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, one of the things that really bothers R’ Lernoboy is the fact that many of his mekuravim who became baalei t’shuva, some of them even Chassidim, left the neighborhood for established Chabad communities, and he is always starting over.

Nevertheless, he admits that he can look at the loss of his mekuravim in a positive light. He never had the option of sitting on his laurels while running mosdos, and he is constantly starting the kiruv process with new people and accompanying them on their journey back to tradition. He



The bar mitzva celebration of one of the mekuravim at the Kosel



Rabbi Lernoboy on mitzva t’fillin

suggested that I interview one of his mekuravim, Yaron Patael, who is an educational consultant at the Open University of Chaifa.

“I took the first steps towards my roots independently. For a long time I went about with a feeling of emptiness as I looked for real meaning in life. I felt a material satiety - feeling satisfied with everything the material world had to offer. I started reading books about Judaism and I was first drawn towards religious Zionism. I even went to learn at Machon Meir in Yerushalayim for a few days.

“Once, on a day off, I went to

visit my mother at her work at the Insurance Ministry and saw the director sitting and learning Tanya with R’ Lernoboy. He saw that I was interested and he invited me to his house.

“I was only starting out and I had many questions that I hadn’t gotten answers for. When he heard my questions he generously offered, ‘Stay at my house. Eat and sleep here until you understand everything.’ I was won over. I saw a man who exhibited tremendous love. Not too many people would take me in like that.

“He began teaching me the foundations of Toras HaChassidus

and I saw that this was something deep that gave spice to whatever I had learned until then. I was drawn to Chassidus, to the concept of the connection between Hashem and a Jew and vice versa. And when I saw his mesirus nefesh in helping me, that really impressed me.

"If they take you into their home, people usually do that to learn over a cup of coffee, but he invited me in for a week despite being busy with six children. I couldn't help but be moved.

"Before I returned to Machon Meir he said, 'You need to go to the Rebbe's yeshiva in Tzfas and you will see that this is the best place for you.' I was unsure. I figured it was only natural for him to want me to learn in a yeshiva of his group. While I thought it over he said, 'In Chabad, when we are unsure, we write to the Rebbe.' I remember innocently saying to him, 'So give me the address and I will write.' He smiled and explained it all patiently.

"I had three questions which I wrote about in my letter. The first question was which yeshiva to go to. The second question was which branch of Judaism I belonged to and needed to follow. The third was how I could make a tikkun for my neshama. I put the letter into a volume of the Igros Kodesh and was curious what the answer would be. To say that I was flabbergasted by the answer is not strong enough to convey how I felt when he read the answer I opened to in volume 17, p. 304. The Rebbe answered each of my three questions:

"In response to the first question about which yeshiva to study in, the Rebbe wrote: **'In response to your letter in which you write various considerations regarding your settling down in the near future. Since the matter depends on many details, explain**

the situation in detail to three friends where you are, and may Hashem give them the right idea about how to advise you.'

"In that same letter, the Rebbe also answered my second question about which derech to pick: **'In any case, my view is known that when you begin learning a profession and especially when you have already invested some energy and some time and there is hope that you can make use of it, then even if you want to say that there is nothing that is 100% assured, it is still worthwhile completing your studies and the reason is obvious.'** So the Rebbe was saying I should continue to learn Chassidus which I had already started.

"At the end of the letter the Rebbe also answered the third question about how to rectify my neshama: **'I hope that you have set times and a soul commitment, as in the aphorism of the Alter Rebbe, both in Nigleh and in Chassidus and participate in spreading the wellsprings, for they are a channel and vessel to receive the brachos from Hashem in what man needs, both materially and spiritually.'**

"I was still reeling when R' Lernoboy pointed out to me that the date on the letter from the Rebbe, 14 Av, was the date on my letter. I could not continue to remain in denial and I surrendered completely. I decided that I would go to the Chabad yeshiva in Tzfas and the rest is history."

Yaron has since spent several years in yeshiva in Tzfas, and Ramat Aviv, married and, after a stint in Yerushalayim, returned to Chaifa where he is a career counselor in the school for business administration and finance at the Open University. He is replacing someone who left the

job after returning to Judaism at the Chabad house of R' Dunin at Mercaz Chorev in Carmel.

"First they hired me on a trial basis. It wasn't common for someone with a beard and a big kippa to work in a place like that in such a position. They checked me out and when I was considered fit for the job I was accepted. I see my work as a type of shlichus. The employees and staff look at me as the person to ask about all matters Jewish and I welcome that."

EXPLAINING ABOUT MOSHIACH

R' Lernoboy is one of those shluchim that could be described as "old school." Whenever I made any follow up calls for this article he was busy with someone else: from a local office learning Chassidus with the manager, to a store that sold birds where he was putting on t'fillin with the sales clerk. He is not the kind of shliach who sits back and waits for someone to come to him. He doesn't have grandiose plans. He is a shliach for the people and his love and concern have brought him many mekuravim.

R' Lernoboy is a shliach who lives Moshiach with utmost simplicity. He is a soldier who will never attempt to sidestep the final shlichus that the Rebbe assigned us.

"You have to explain and break down the concept of Moshiach with parables and examples so that people understand it. When they ask me whether I believe that the Rebbe is Moshiach, I said, 'Of course, and if you want to understand why, you are welcome to learn about it with me.' In addition to learning about Moshiach you have to get people to write to the Rebbe, because when someone sees a miracle, he no longer needs an explanation."